

AN
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE, *and* REIGN
OF
DAVID,
KING of ISRAEL:

Interpersed with various
CONJECTURES, DIGRESSIONS,
and DISQUISITIONS.

In which (among other things)
Mr. BAYLE's Criticisms, upon the *Conduct*, and
Character of that PRINCE, are fully considered.

*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also
shall not wither.*

PSAL. I.

By the Author of *Revelation Examined with Candour*.

BOOK III.

D U B L I N:

Printed in the Year M D C C X L I I I.

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TO HIS GRACE the

PRIMATE

OF

IRELAND.

May it please your GRACE,

I TAKE this occasion, as I shall every other, of publickly avowing the honour I bear you: although with little advantage to you, or distinction to myself; unless merely in the manner of professing that veneration, and esteem, which is borne you, alike, by every man of this nation; where you are justly considered, as a publick parent, equally loved, and honoured. How well you are intitled to this appellation, will sufficiently appear, when it is remembered, that to you, under God, this nation owes the main support of her Poor, in their late general calamity. The famine was far extended, and the mortality begun; when your unexampled, and unbounded charity, like the sacred censer in the hand of *Aaron*, interposed between the living, and the dead, and *the plague was stayed*.

The present age sufficiently acknowledge this, and posterity will know it, without the aid of this anonymous, and short-lived letter; and, perhaps, may learn from this, and other coeval (though less eminent) instances, that wealth is sometimes more useful, in the hands of the clergy, than some of their lay-brethren have always been willing to allow. It

may prove an occasion of letting their own equal inquiries inform them, in what hands it is more virtuously, or honourably imployed, in the prosperous days of the community ; or with more publick spirit, and Christian beneficence, in those of its distress. Yours, my Lord, was then, confessedly, a publick Fund, a pure, and salutary fountain, from whence all that thirsted might draw, and drink ; and did so, by many thousands a day (without the least danger of riot, or excess) to the saving of such a multitude of lives, as will be utterly incredible with posterity.

May the Providence of God, (clearly seen in your advancement to this high station) that Providence, which hath remarkably blessed you, with very uncommon vigour, both of body, and mind, to this advanced age, long continue *both* to you, and *you* to us ! And may you conclude your blessed life, as you have led it, after the example of your LORD, and SAVIOUR, *doing good !*

This end, and this example, we all should have in view, in all our purposes, as, I trust in God, the author of this book had, both in publishing it to the world, and inscribing it to you ; for, in truth, he expects no addition, either of honour, or interest, to him, from this unauthentic proof of his being, with the truest veneration, and esteem,

Your GRACE's

Most dutiful, and

most obedient,

humble Servant.

A N
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
L I F E, and R E I G N
O F
King *D A V I D*.

B O O K III.

C H A P. I.

David, *beholding Bathsheba batheing herself, falls under the Temptation ; and hath criminal Commerce with her : Uriah's Death the inevitable Consequence of this Commerce.*

IN the close of the last book, we left *David*, in the height of honour, and happiness ; his country flourishing, his armies successful, and his enemies at his feet. But the heights of fortune, and felicity are not, here, the securest, and the steadiest stations : tempests, and temptations encompass them ; which suffer nothing serene, and permanent, in this frail, unstable state.

The season of warfare returned ; the *Ammonites* were the enemies ; and indignities, personal to *David*, were to be vindicated ; decency, and dignity more naturally referred them, to the chastisement of others. *Joab*, therefore, and all *Israel* with him,

were sent into the field, and *David* continued at home.

Joab, although he came off victorious in the last expedition, had, however, been reduced to great streights; seemingly, from some defect in his own conduct. And, therefore, *David* seems to have been now more than ordinarily careful, to send him out well attended. Inasmuch as he sent out, not only all the flower of the *Israelite* forces, but likewise, his own life-guard (his worthies, as I apprehend, included) along with him *. And the effects were answerable: for the text tells us, that *they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah*, (their capital) *but David tarried still at Jerusalem*.

And it came to pass, that whilst he was there, rising one evening, from his afternoon's rest, and walking upon the roof of his house, to enjoy the refreshment of the evening air; the usual relief of warmer climates; he happened, unfortunately, to cast his eye upon a most beautiful woman, who was bathing herself for health and refreshment, in that cool, and seasonable hour: but whether in her garden, or court yard, overlooked by the palace, or in some apartment of her house, whose windows opened that way, is not certain. Tradition points out the place of a fountain, still called after her name: which should make it probable, that she bathed in a garden, did not *Josephus* expressly declare, that it was in her own house. And, indeed, the natural modesty, and decency of the sex, and circumstance of the time, (the evening) make his account much more credible. And it is certain, that the declining rays of the sun, shooting into the inmost recesses of her chamber, at that time of the day, and throwing a great lustre around her, might discover her very clearly, to very distant eyes, without

* So, I think, we are well warranted to understand those words, 2 Sam. xi. 1. *David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel.*

out the least suspicion on her part, of any possibility of her being seen : and, of consequence, consistently with all the reserve of modesty. However, this only is undoubted ; that *David*, struck with her person, and beauty, which, supposing it under the conduct of the most guarded modesty, might yet, in the action of batheing, be, to him, a sight new, extraordinary, and surprizing, (and such, perhaps, as few modest men have ever beheld, but by accident) suffered himself to be too much transported with it, and fell at once under the temptation. For, inquireing in the instant, and learning who she was, he sent, and had her brought into his apartment, where he had criminal commerce with her ; and soon after suffered her to return to her house.

All this was a sudden, and, as it should seem, from *Nathan's* parable, a secret transaction.

I shall not take upon me, to account for this quick, impetuous passion, (the starts of passion are, perhaps, the strangest phænomena in our frame) and much less will I presume either to excuse, or insult it : one thing only we know, that whatever, in any degree, impairs the power of reason, adds so much to the power of passion ; and, possibly, that numbness of reason, that stupidity, which never fails to attend an afternoon's sleep, upon a full meal, might have been one ingredient, or, some way, or other, an addition to the extravagance of this ; at least, the humane reader will pardon me the weakness of wishing to alleviate it.

The woman was *Bathsheba*, the wife of *Uriah*, one of the king's worthies, and then with *Joab*, in the field. And it was easy for the king to send for her, under the pretext of conveying some dispatches to her husband, thro' her hands.

What the state of *David's* mind was, when the tumult of passion was laid, *Bathsheba* departed, and reason returned, I shall not take upon me to paint. The calm reflections of a spirit, truly religious, will

best imagine the horrors of so complicated a guilt, upon the recoil of conscience. When all those passions, whose blandishments, but a few moments before, deluded, seduced, and overset his reason, now resumed their full deformity : or rushed into their contrary extremes : desire, into distraction ; the sweets of pleasure, into bitterness of soul ; love, into self-detestation ; and hope, almost into the horrors of despair ! The wife of one of his own worthies, apparently, an innocent, and a valuable woman, abused, and tainted, and brought to the very brink of ruin, and infamy ! A brave man basely dishonoured ! and a faithful subject irreparably injured ! The laws of God trampled under foot — of that God, who had so eminently distinguished, exalted, and honoured him ! Well might he cry out, in the anguish of this distracted condition ; *Fearfulness, and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.* In one word, his condition was now so dreadful, that it was not easy for him, to bring himself to the presumption of even petitioning for mercy ! And this I take to be the true reason, why we find no Psalm of *David's* penn'd upon this occasion. Not that he continued any time, and much less a long time, (as some have weakly imagined) in a state of impenitence : that is, the stupidity, not of an initiating sinner, but a scared conscience.

Besides, had that been his case, the intercourse had been continued, and the guilt repeated, which there is not the least colour of reason to believe, or even suspect. Quite the contrary : I am satisfied, nothing succeeded this first act of guilt, but sincere repentance, the rack of conscience, and a religious habit of abstinence, from the repetition of it. The indulgence in guilt, was an impetuous, unruly act of passion : the abstinence from repeating it, a calm, continued habit of religion.

Holy, and blessed abstinence! sure test of virtue, and proof of penitence! Could any merit in mortals atone for guilt, in the sight of God, I own, I should seek no other satisfaction for this, than the sacrifice of such an abstinence. But, alas! mortal guilt is not so expiated; nor its dreadful consequences to be evaded, or escaped!

Bathsheba, was with child; the proof of her adultery, incontestable; and the punishment due to it, inevitable, otherwise than from the cover of a subsequent commerce with her husband. Accordingly, *Uriah* is sent for, and *Joab* secretly directed to dispatch him to the king, as from himself; probably, as a fit person to inform his majesty of the condition of the army; and to receive his further commands, in relation to the siege. And it is certain, that if *Uriah* were *Joab's* armour-bearer, as *Josephus* assures us he was, a fitter person could not have been chosen.

When he arrived, the king received him kindly; inquired, *how Joab, and the people with him did, and how the war prospered*: And when he had examined him, as he thought fit, directed him to go home, and refresh himself, after the fatigue of his journey; and, when he was departed from the palace, ordered (as a singular mark of his favour) that a mess of meat, from the king's table, should follow him to his house. It followed accordingly, but found him not there. For the text tells us, *Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.*

When *David* heard, that *Uriah* had not gone home to his house, but stayed all night, in the palace with those of his fellow soldiers, who then kept the ward of the king's house, he sent for him the next morning, and rebuked him, in a kind manner, for not having taken proper care of himself, after the toil of his journey. *Uriah*, in return, gave the king to understand, that ease, and indulgence would

would ill become him, in the present situation of his majesty's affairs, and hard service of his troops — The answer, in the original, is truly heroic :— *And Uriah said unto David, The Ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go into mine house, to eat, and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.*

The reader, I believe, can have no doubt, that this disappointment threw the king into great perplexity : he was evidently at a loss what to do, or how to conduct himself : and, in that doubt, commanded *Uriah* to continue at *Jerusalem*, one day more : *Tarry here*, said the king, *to-day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart.* Accordingly, we learn from the text, that he abode there that day, and the next also. *David* was, doubtless, still at a loss what to do : and, probably, not without hopes, that *Uriah's* being so long in the same city, with so amiable a woman as *Bathsheba*, might soften the severity of his resolution, and induce him to make her a visit — But in vain : *Uriah* was determined, and inflexible.

David had but one thing left to gain his point : and that was, to try what effect wine, and good cheer might have upon the soldier's spirit : Men of that profession, do not think themselves bound, (out of their seasons of discipline) to be strictly upon their guard, against such occasional refreshments, and reliefs of toil ; which sometimes make the wisest men, forget their severest resolutions, and might naturally be hoped to have the same effect upon *Uriah* ; especially, with regard to a resolution against nature, and too strictly severe.

David tried the experiment ; but to no purpose. We are given to understand from the text, that he made *Uriah* drink, to some excess, enough, to disturb his reason, but not, to shake his resolution :
for

for when he left the palace in the evening, he again resorted to the king's guard, and passed his night with them: *but went not down to his house.*

What horrors seized the soul of *David*, upon hearing this news, the next morning, is much easier to be imagined, than expressed. He had injured a brave man: to undo, or to repair the evil, was impossible; all that he could hope, was, to hide the injury, and not to aggravate by exposing it. He had done all in his power, to effect that; but to no purpose——If the infamy were exposed, it were, in all appearance, impossible to protect *Bathsheba*: it is not clear, that he could protect himself. An affair of that consequence would, doubtless, be brought before the supreme council of the Seventy, established by *Moses* *: from its nature, the most solemn, and powerful assembly, that ever sat, in judgment, in any state! made up of the princes, and rulers of every tribe. Among whom, a man of *Uriah's* alliance †, and consequence, must have many

* Some people infer, from the silence of the Scriptures, that the *Sanhedrim* had ceased under their kings: but they forget, how absurd it is to suppose, that a council, so solemnly instituted by God, and in the continuance of which, every tribe was so nearly interested, should ever cease, tho', perhaps, its power might, at certain periods, have been considerably lessened, and, possibly, was so now.

Besides, there is, I think, a plain proof of its subsisting, deducible from *chap. viii. of Ezekiel*, where we find seventy anti-ents of the people, with *Paazaniah*, the son of *Shaphan*, (a famous scribe in the days of *Josiah*) in the midst of them, offering incense to idols: who could these seventy anti-ents be, but the *Sanhedrim*?

What their power was in the days of *David*, we cannot say; but what it was after the captivity, will best be learn'd from *Josephus's Antiq. lib. xiv cap. 17.* Where we find them calling *Herod* before them, for putting a notorious robber to death, without their sentence; when he was *tetrarch of Galilee*, and his father *procurator of Judea*. And it was as much as king *Hyrcanus* could do, to save his life.

† He was married to the daughter of *Ammiel*, the son of *Achitophel*.

ny friends ; altho' justice should otherwise fail, to have its due weight.

The *Talmudists* extend the jurisdiction of this council, even over kings. I know, they are generally disbelieved in this point ; but I sincerely own, I know not for what reason, especially, when it appears from *chap. xxxviii. ver. 5*, of *Jeremiah*, that the princes had a power, which the king could not controul.

Nay, altho' it should be imagined, that the *Sanhedrim* did not then subsist, I think, there is some reason to believe, that the very priesthood could bring both *David*, and *Bathsheba*, to public justice, upon this occasion. This we know, that they were able to put the law of leprosy in execution, upon *Uzziab*, one of the greatest princes of his descent ; in the very height, and pride of his glory (*2 Chron. xxvi. 20, 21.*) ; for altho' he had then an army of four hundred thousand valiant men, under his command, they thrust him out of the temple, and shut him up in a *several-house*, to the day of his death.

This, then, I take to be, beyond all doubt, the truth of *David's* case. He had committed one great crime ; and he was under a kind of necessity* of protecting that, by committing a greater. He could not bear to see the innocent woman, he had injured, brought to public infamy ; and he could not screen her from it, but by the death of her innocent husband. And thus adultery begat murder. *Uriab* was sent for, the next morning, and charged with dispatches to the general, which contained his own death-warrant †.

It

* In the general, the rule of duty is obvious. A man should die rather than commit sin ; nor will I presume to say there is any exception to this rule : yet I cannot pronounce it impossible, that one sin may draw men into dilemma's of greater.

† Some have imagined, that *Uriab* forbore going to his own house, from a suspicion of the king's commerce with his wife. Had this been the case, he had certainly examined the dispatches, sent by him to *Joab*.

It is melancholy to observe, that whilst we are tossed upon the waves of this world, the boisterous waves of passion, and appetite, the very best men are but too much in the condition of *St. Peter* in the sea ; they walk one step upright, and sink the next. And sinking one step, if the hand of mercy be not reached out to rescue them, they must sink deeper. *David*, but this moment, sadly repented of one great guilt, and is now upon the verge of perpetrating a greater.

The reader will, I believe, be better satisfied, to take the account of this matter, from the sacred historian's own words, *2 Sam. xi. 14, 15, 16, and 17 verses*. I can throw no light upon the text by varying them, and God forbid, I should wish to obscure it. He tells us, that *in the morning it came to pass, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.— And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place, where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab : and there fell some of the people of the servants of David, and Uriah, the Hittite, died also.*

Uriah's known bravery made it easily apprehended, that he would be foremost in danger : and, of consequence, being deserted in it, he must die.

Thus fell this brave man ; a sacrifice to his own heroic virtue, and his prince's guilt. He fell, but not alone ; some of his brave companions in arms* stood by him, to the last, nor deserted him in death.

When this black, and horrid deed was perpetrated, a messenger was immediately dispatched, to carry the news to *David* ; altho' under colour of inform-

* *And there fell (saith the text) of the people of the servants of David : by which I understand some of his worthies, the companions of Uriah.*

forming him of the state of the war in general, and the ill success of the last attack.—And the messenger was particularly instructed, that, if he found the king's wrath rise to a high degree, on account of the rashness of their attempt, and too near approach to the city walls, he should then add, that *Uriah, the Hittite, was dead also* †.

Joab's messenger seems to have been a man of uncommon address: who, judging it more adviseable, to prevent the king's anger, than to take upon him how to appease it; when he had given his majesty a general account of the army, added a relation of the late unlucky skirmish, in the following manner; That, as they were carrying on their approaches to the city, the enemy sallied upon them, and repulsed them, to a considerable distance: but were soon beaten back, and pursued to the gates of the city. That, in the ardour of the pursuit, some of the *Israelite* forces, approaching too near the walls, suffered by the shot of those who defended them: That some of his majesty's servants were unhappily slain, upon that occasion, and, among the rest, *Uriah, the Hittite*.

The king, having all he wanted in the account of *Uriah's* death, bore the rest of his loss, with sufficient patience; and directed the messenger to console his general, upon this occasion, by letting him know, that this misfortune must be numbered among the common accidents of war: that the sword made no distinction, between the hero, and the coward; but devoured all alike: that he must make his battle stronger; and persevere in assaulting the city, till he took it. And so the matter ended.

Whoever reads the account of this affair, in the original relation, will easily be led to make this plain observation upon it; That *David* was wont to conduct

† In the text it is, *Thy servant Uriah, &c.* This expression is, I think, a plain proof, that *David's* worthies were particularly distinguished, by the name of *David's* servants.

duct himself in his wars, by the examples of the good, or ill success, of the captains of his own nation, (in former ages) according to their good, or ill conduct. And, therefore, it was, that *Joab* apprehended, he should be upbraided, for suffering his men to come within the reach of the enemies arrows, from the wall, with the example of *Abimelech's* fate, who fell, as *Pyrrhus* did, (and, what is pretty extraordinary, in a city of the same name) by a like instance of rashness---2 Sam. xi. 19, 20, 21. And, therefore, *Joab* charged the messenger, saying, *When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, and if so be, that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore, approached ye so nigh unto the city, when ye did fight? Knew ye not, that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him, from the wall, that he died in Thebez? Why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant, Uriah, the Hittite, is dead also.*

As I have long been of opinion, that the Greeks borrowed most, if not all their mythology, from the sacred history, the scheme of this work will, I hope, bear me out, in adding, that the fable of *Bellerophon* is, I think, founded upon the story of *Uriah*.

Bellerophon, who, as some scholiasts think, should be read *Boulepheron* (a council-carrier) was a stranger at the court of *Prætus*, as *Uriah* (being a Hittite) was at the court of *David*. He declined the embraces of *Sthenobæa*, as *Uriah* did the bed of *Bathsheba*; and was, for that reason, sent to *Jobates*, general of *Prætus's* army, with letters, which contained a direction to put him to death: as *Uriah* was sent to *Joab*, *David's* general. And was sent by *Jobates*, with a small guard, upon an attack, in which it was intended, he should be slain; as *Uriah* was by *Joab*, to that in which he fell. The main of the history is the same in both: and the variations, such, as might naturally be expected, in fabulous imbellishments.

Hence

Hence it is, that the mythologist, not being tied to truth, thought himself bound, in point of poetic justice, to deliver the virtue of *Bellerophon*, from the evil intended him : and so his history ends, happily in this world ; as, I doubt not, *Uriah's* does in the next.

C H A P. II.

David takes Bathsheba to his house, and makes her his wife. God sends Nathan, the prophet, to rebuke him, and denounce the divine vengeance, upon his guilt.

WHEN *Bathsheba* heard, that *Uriah*, her husband, was dead, she mourned for him, according to the custom of her country : which is generally supposed to be, by the keeping of a fast, for seven days successively ; eating nothing each day, till the sun was set. And when her mourning was over, *David* sent, and took her to his house ; and she became his wife, and bare him a son, the issue of his criminal commerce with her.

It cannot be denied, that there was a manifest indecency, in *David's* taking *Bathsheba* to be his wife, so soon after her husband's death. And some think, her compliance a proof of her indifference, and disregard, for her husband.

This conduct will, however, bear this excuse, that they were anxious to hide the infamy of their commerce ; and to effect that, no time was to be lost. If *Bathsheba* miscarried, their guilt was concealed ; at least, could not be proved. And if she came to her full time, it was easy to pretend, she came before it ; at least, so far, as to screen her from any criminal process : which could not be done, had the marriage been delayed. And, in this case, *Bathsheba* may be pardoned the sacrificing of not only decency, but even a real esteem, and affection for her husband, to the necessary care of her own fame, and life. Presump-
tions,

tions, indeed, lay against them; and, in all appearance, this whole affair could now be no longer a real secret. It passed through too many hands; and is but too probable, that *David's*, *Bathsheba's*, and *Joab's* messengers, were, in effect, privy to it. And the birth of a child, begotten in the time of *Uriah's* absence, the notoriety of that absence, and his subsequent abstinence from *Bathsheba's* bed, strongly published both the guilt, and the infamy, to the thinking part of the world, however it might be disguised to others. *David* was too knowing, not to be sufficiently conscious of all this; and too honourable, and too conscientious, not to feel the inherent, and subsequent stings of guilt, and infamy, deep at his heart. But what should he do? Could he publish his own shame? Could he proclaim his own infamy? Private penitence was all that was in his power; and that could make no reparation, for the publick scandal, which he had brought upon the religion, and people of God; - which, yet, would be more publick, and much more notorious, if he himself proclaimed it: and after all, possibly, the secret was, yet, but in a few hands.

In this rack of conscience, and distraction of distress, the Providence of God, seasonably, and mercifully, interposed: and the LORD sent *Nathan*, the prophet, to *David*, to admonish him of his guilt, and to bring him to a publick confession of it. And, indeed, a fitter person could not, in all human appearance, have been chosen for such a commission. He waited upon the king, with the air of a complainant, who brought a case of great commiseration, before his majesty, and submitted it to his arbitration. He told him, in the words of the sacred writer, for no other can do him justice, That *there were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks, and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought, and nourished up: and it grew up together with*

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him,

him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his own bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man, that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man, that was come to him.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man, that hath done this thing, shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

It is easy to imagine, how deep these words of Nathan, pronounced in all the dignity, and authority of his character, sunk into David's soul! especially, when the prophet proceeded to denounce the sentence of God upon his guilt, in the following manner, ver. 7. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel—— I anointed thee king of Israel, and delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: and I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel, and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such, and such, things. Wherefore, hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah, the Hittite, with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him, with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house. Because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah to be thy wife, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives, in the sight of this sun: for thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun*.

Here

* Here is a long train of temporal calamities, and chastisements,

Here he paused — And *David*, over-whelmed with shame, stung with remorse, and oppressed with a dreadful sense of the divine vengeance, impending, and ready to fall down upon himself, and his family, could only give utterance to this short sentence — *I have sinned against the Lord* — To which *Nathan* immediately subjoined — *The Lord also hath put away thy sin* † ; *thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because, by this deed, thou hast given great occasion, to the enemies of the Lord, to blaspheme, the child also* *, *that is born unto thee, shall surely die.*

There is something unspeakably gracious, in this sudden sentence of pardon, pronounced by the prophet, in the instant of *David's* confession of guilt, and humiliation before God. But, I think, we may fairly infer from it, that this pardon was not purchased, by that instantaneous submission ; but that, in truth, it was now only declared, but purchased, at the price of a long preceding penitence. Nor is it otherwise to be accounted for, consistently with God's innate abhorrence of guilt, and established extraordinary methods of reconciliation, and forgiveness : which they would do well seriously to revolve, who imagine, that *David* was in a state of impenitence, from the day of his first commerce with *Bathsheba*, till this instant. A supposition, in my

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apprehension,

to be inflicted upon *David*, on the score of his guilt ; but the candid reader will please to observe, that they are all to be inflicted upon him, in this world ; that there is not the least hint of any part of his punishment's being deferred to the next : even mortal guilt (the eternal vengeance due to it being remitted) had all its punishment in this world : and shall what some call *venial* guilt be chastised in the next ? The inference is obvious : *Nathan* knew nothing of purgatory ! or, if he did, he snipt the fairest occasion of revealing it to the world, that ever offered itself.

† That is the mortal guilt, and eternal punishment ; together with the temporal punishment of death, due to that offence, by the *Mosaic* law.

* The chastisement of this guilt, shall be seen also in the child, who was the off-spring of it.

apprehension, as injurious to *David*, as it is dangerous to true religion.

That he had, in fact, sorrowed for these sins, confessed them to Almighty God, and earnestly implored forgiveness, before the pardon pronounced by *Nathan*, is to me evident from *Psalms* xxxii, in which, now reinstated in the favour of God, and happy beyond expression, upon that account, he most beautifully, and feelingly describes the distressed condition he was in, before that pardon was pronounced; his body distempered, and wasted with grief, and his mind upon the rack.

*When I kept silence *, my bones waxed old, through my roaring, all the day long. For, day and night, thy hand was heavy upon me — I acknowledged my sin unto thee: and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord. And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah——* And what was the consequence?— His moisture was turned into the dryness † of summer —— The change was, as if he had been removed, at once, from the depth of winter, into midsummer; as if all the storms, and rains, and clouds of that gloomy season, (the finest emblems of grief) were changed, at once, into serenity, and sunshine: all heaven clear, unclouded, and smiling upon him.

The same thing is also evident, as I apprehend, from *Psalms* cxxx. plainly written in the spirit of a penitent, who trusted in the infinite mercy of God, and hoped for forgiveness, but had not yet obtained it §.

But,

* Some have inferred from these words, That *David* continued some time impenitent: but, for my own part, I can only infer from them, that he was, perhaps, for some time, under such a sense of guilt, as would not let him presume to pray: and such a silence is the best proof of true compunction of conscience, or rather, that he had not yet made a publick confession of his guilt. Had he been long impenitent, it were impossible for him to say; *Mine iniquity have I not hid.*

† So the word should be translated.

§ 3. *If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss:*

© *Lord, who may abide it?*

4. *For*

But, to proceed——

David, being now fully satisfied, that his guilt was too well known to the world, and that God would pursue it, with publick vengeance, found it high time to do every thing, that in him lay, to wipe off the reproach, he had brought upon his holy religion, and make all possible reparation, for the offence he had given to God, and man; and (I doubt not) rejoiced in the occasion, of taking publick shame to himself, for such complicated, and aggravated guilt; and making a publick confession of it, before the whole world. — And to this purpose, he then composed, and published the fifty-first *Psalms*, directing it, *To the chief musician*; and, without doubt, commanding it to be publickly sung in the tabernacle, in the presence of all his people: himself attending, and prostrate before the throne of mercy.

It is, surely, matter of uncommon curiosity, to contemplate upon *David*, in this condition. Behold the greatest monarch of the earth, humbled for his sins before God! confessing his shame, with contrition, and confusion of face! calling out for mercy, and imploring pardon, in the presence of his meanest subjects! There is something, in such an image of penitence, more fitted to strike the soul, with a dread, and abhorrence of guilt, than it is possible to express: something more edifying, more adapted to the human infirmities, and more powerful to reform them, than the most perfect example of unsinning obedience; especially, if the supplications, and petitions he pours out to God, be thoroughly suited to the solemnity of the occasion, and condition of the

E c 3

penitent:

4. For there is mercy with thee: therefore, shalt thou be feared.
5. I look for the Lord, my soul doth wait for him: in his word is my trust.
6. My soul fleeth unto the Lord: before the morning-watch, I say, before the morning-watch.
7. O Israel, trust in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy: and with him is plenteous redemption.
8. And he shall redeem Israel, from all his sins.

penitent ; as they, undoubtedly, are in this fifty-first *Psalms*. Here the penitent humbly, and earnestly begs for mercy — He acknowledges his sin, and his innate depravity, the source of it — He begs to be renewed in the grace of God — and in that health, which the horror of his wickedness had impaired — Above all, he earnestly beseeches God, not to cast him off, nor deliver him up to a reprobate sense : — *Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me — O give me the comfort of thy help again — deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation* — In one word, the soul of shame, of sorrow, of remorse, of sincere repentance, and bitter anguish, under the agonies of guilt, breathes strong, and fervent, through every line of this hallowed composition. And it is (I doubt not) *David's* greatest consolation, at this moment, when he blesses God, for the providential effects of his fall, that those crimes, which wrought his shame, and sorrow, and infamy, have, in the humility, the piety, the contrition of confessing them, (in this, and several other *Psalms*, composed upon the same occasion) rescued, and reformed, millions.

Give me leave to add, that there were two circumstances of distress, which attended upon *David's* fall ; and have not (as I apprehend) been sufficiently considered, by any of the commentators : and yet, they are, beyond all question, the greatest, and the severest, that human nature can suffer.

The first is ; The distress he endured, on account of the obloquy, and reproach brought upon the true religion, and the truly religious, by his guilt : And the second ; The reproach, and endless insults, brought upon himself, even by his repentance, and humiliation, before God, and the world.

Both these are fully set forth, in the sixty-ninth *Psalms*.

Ver. 3. *I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried : mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God.*

5. *O God!*

5. O God! thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.

6. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel!

7. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face.

8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

9. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me.

10. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was turned to my reproach.

11. I made sack-cloth also my garment: and I became a proverb unto them.

12. They that sit in the gate, speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.

13. But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy bear me, in the truth of thy salvation.

14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

15. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

16. Hear me, O Lord; for thy loving kindness is good: turn unto me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

17. And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble: bear me speedily.

18. Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me, because of mine enemies.

19. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before me.

20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

Let any ingenuous man, who feels for virtue, and is not scared to shame, put the question to himself: I appeal to his own heart, whether he would not infinitely rather die, than endure the state now described, even for a few days? forsaken by his friends, scorned by his enemies, insulted by his inferiors; the scoff of libertines, and the song of sots? What then must we think of the fortitude, and magnanimity of that man, who could endure all this, for a series of years? Or rather, how shall we adore that unfailing mercy, and all-sufficient goodness, which could support him thus, under the quickest sense of shame, and infamy, and deepest compunctions of conscience? which could enable him, to bear up steadily against guilt, infamy, and the evil world united; from a principle of true religion! And, in the end, even rejoice, in his sad estate; as he plainly perceived, it must finally tend to promote the true interest of virtue, and glory of God; that is, must finally tend to promote that interest, which was the great governing principle, and main purpose, of his life!

C H A P. III.

Some Account of Nathan, the Prophet. The Child, born of Bathsheba, sickens. David fasts, and humbles himself, before God, in his behalf; but to no purpose. The Child dies. David's remarkable Resignation, to the Will of God. Solomon is born, and blessed.

THAT very curious, and exquisite parable of *Nathan's*, recounted in the last chapter, which placed *David's* guilt in so clear a light, and, at the same time, so hid it from himself, as to extort his own sentence of condemnation, from his own mouth; at once, so well concealed the criminal, and inflamed the crime, as to irritate the king's resentment,

resentment, beyond all the bounds of justice *. The author of so masterly a parable, naturally awakens the reader's curiosity, to learn something of so extraordinary a person. But, before I proceed to that head, it will be proper to observe to the reader, that there is one difficulty, in *Nathan's* charge against *David*, which none of the commentators have cleared. It is this: It seems to be made a part of *David's* accusation, That he married *Bathsheba* — *Thou hast killed Uriah, the Hittite, with the sword, AND HAST TAKEN HIS WIFE TO BE THY WIFE.* Now, I own, I can see no guilt in this, other than that of multiplying wives, which the kings of *Israel* were expressly forbidden to do, *Deut. xvii. 17.* inasmuch as no law of God, or nature, prohibit such a marriage, any otherwise than as they prohibit polygamy. Unless the prophet means, that he murdered *Uriah*, in order to make *Bathsheba* his wife; which must be owned to be a very crying guilt.

There is, therefore, I presume, no room for any other censure, upon this part of *David's* conduct. He had injured (as I apprehend) an innocent, and a very valuable woman: and the only reparation in his power, and proof of his esteem, was, to make her his wife. But, alas! this reparation to her, was none, either to *Uriah*, or his family, or the righteous Arbiter of the earth; or the reproach brought upon the true religion, by this infamous behaviour, in a prince, who was the great example, teacher, and guardian of it.

But, to return to *Nathan*:

We learn little more of this great man, in the sacred writings, than that he was *David's* prophet, intimate counsellor, and historiographer: and the knowledge of him, in this last character, must raise the reader's esteem

* By the law of God, the sheep-thief should, at most, but restore four-fold, *Exod. xxii. 1.* *If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.*

esteem of his modesty, to the highest degree : inas-much as he hath been very careful, not to make himself his theme ; nor so much as to mention his own name, where it could be avoided, with justice to his history. *Josephus* says of him, that he was a *polite, and a prudent man* : one, who knew how to temper the severity of wisdom, with sweetness of manners. And *Grotius* compares him to *Manius Lepidus* : of whom *Tacitus* says, That he found him to be a grave, and wise man, in those times ; who had a talent of turning away the emperor's mind, from those cruel purposes, to which the vile flattery of others inclined him ; and was, at the same time, in equal favour, and authority, with *Tiberius*.

He next finds some resemblance in him, to *Piso*, the *Roman* high-priest under *Tiberius* ; of whom the same *Tacitus* says, That he was not author of any servile sentence ; and could, upon occasion, moderate with wisdom. But it must be owned, that the negative part of this last character, is very far from doing justice, to the genius of *Nathan* ; who sufficiently appears, in the sacred writings, to be rather an inspirer of noble purposes, than a mere non-adviser of such, as were base, and servile——Witness his strong encouragement to *David*, to put his noble design of building the temple of God, into immediate execution. And it were but justice to add, That he could do more, than moderate wisely ; for it is evident, that he knew also, how to reprove princes, with authority, and yet, without offence ; which must he allowed to require very uncommon talents, with a dexterity of address, perhaps, yet rarer. And this, *Nathan* did, without being impaired, in any degree, either of favour, or affection, with *David* : quite otherwise ; he seems to have increased in both, his whole life long. But, it must be owned, that his known character of being inspired by God, bore him out in this conduct, beyond the lot of other mortals ; and so justly endeared him to *David*, that
tradition,

tradition tells us he named one son after him, and committed another to his tuition. And it must be owned, that *Solomon*, in all probability, could not have been placed under a better preceptor, nor one whose instructions would better intitle him, to that blessed appellation of *Jedidjab*, or, the beloved of God.

Whoever considers the predictions of divine vengeance, now denounced against *David*, on the score of his guilt, in the matter of *Uriah*, must surely find them to be, in their nature, very extraordinary—His family to continue, beyond any other regal race, in the known world; and yet, the sword to continue as long—never to depart from it!

A king—the greatest of his time! his dominion thoroughly established, and his enemies under his feet; highly honoured, and beloved, at home, and as highly awful, to all the neighbouring nations!—Such a king threatened, to have his wives publicly prostituted, before the face of all his people! And what is yet much stranger, more shocking, and more incredible, by one of his own race! and, as a sure proof of this, the darling offspring of his guilt, to perish quickly, before his eyes! He alone, who fills futurity, could foresee this; he only, who sways the world, and knows what evil appetites, and dispositions, unrestrained, will attempt, and perpetrate, could pronounce it; and to put it beyond all doubt, that he did foresee it, he immediately smote the child, which *Bathsheba* bare to *David*, with a mortal disease.

David had, upon his humiliation, and repentance, just experienced one signal mercy from God; he could not tell, how far the continuance of those holy offices, might prevail yet further, upon a Being of infinite benignity. It is true, the denunciation of vengeance was positive; but many such denunciations in scripture, seemingly positive, are yet, really conditional. Or, supposing it positive, like the sentence of death, upon *Adam*, yet might it not be
immediate;

immediate ; but respited, as his was. At worst, he could neither err, nor offend, in that extreme. And for these reasons it was, as he himself gives us to understand, that *David* (as the text tells us) *besought God for the child ; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.*

And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth : but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

Thus he continued fasting, mourning, and imploring God, for seven days successively. *And it came to pass* (says the sacred historian, 2 Sam. xii. 18.) *on the seventh day, that the child died : and the servants of David feared to tell him, that the child was dead : for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice : How will he then vex himself, if we tell him, that the child is dead ! But when David saw, that his servants whispered, David perceived, that the child was dead : therefore, David said unto his servants, Is the child dead ? And they said, He is dead. Then David* (with a resignation, and a resolution, never to be enough admired, and imitated) *arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped : then he came unto his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.*

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done ? Thou didst fast, and weep for the child, while it was alive ; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise, and eat bread.

To this question, *David* made the most truly heroic, philosophic, and religious answer, recorded in history : *And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted, and wept : for I said, Who can tell, whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live ? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast ? Can I bring him back again ? I shall go to him, but he shall*
not

not return to me. This, I will venture to say, is the noblest lesson, upon all that is reasonable, and religious in grief, that ever was penned.

I cannot but observe, upon this occasion, that the thinking reader must find it very surprising, to see so wise a man as *David*, fasting, and mourning, in so extraordinary a manner, for a child, who, being yet an infant, could not, possibly, have been endeared to him, by any of those blandishments, which so strongly engage the parental affections, to their offspring ; and who, as he was a dreadful monument of guilt, one would imagine, should be, to so good a man, more an object of detestation, than desire ; and must moreover, if he lived, be a perpetual brand of infamy, upon his parents.

The true way of accounting for it is, by ascribing it, as *Le Clerc* does, to *David's* excess of passion for *Bathsheba* ; which so strongly attached him to every offspring of hers ; and made him forget every thing in this child, but that motive of indearment. Besides this, there is something in human nature, which prompts us to rate things after a manner, seemingly, unaccountable ; and to estimate them, not according to their real worth, but according to the expence, or trouble, or even the distress, they have cost us. However, all this availed nothing at present : dear as this child had cost *David*, he now was deprived of him.

Thus was the first instance of the divine vengeance, upon *David's* guilt, speedily, and rigidly executed : other instances of it were fulfilled in their order, before his own eyes ; as will abundantly appear, in the sequel of this history ; and the dreadfullest of all the rest, *The sword shall never depart from thine house*, sadly, and successively fulfilled in his posterity ; from the death of *Ammon*, by the order of his own brother, to the slaughter of the sons of *Zedekiah*, before his own eyes, by the king of *Babylon*.

Give

Give me leave to add, (and let the reader make his own inferences) that *David's* guilt was more signally, and dreadfully punished, in his own person, and in his posterity, than any guilt I ever heard, or read of, in any other person, since *Adam* *.

The *Jews* are of opinion, that his own decree of repaying the robbery four-fold, was strictly executed upon him. And as he was, professedly, punished by the death of one of his sons, for the murder of *Uriah*, they imagine, that the other three also, who died violent deaths, fell so many sacrifices, to the divine justice, upon the same account.

When *David* had sufficiently humbled himself, under this first chastisement of God upon him, for his sins; and supported himself under the loss of his child, by the prospect of finding him one day again, in a better world; his next care was, to comfort *Bathsheba* the best he could, under their common calamity: and, as she appears to have been a meek, and reasonable woman, his task (we may well presume) was so much the easier. She also, without doubt, resigned, and submitted, and her resignation was rewarded accordingly; for she soon after conceived by *David*, and bare him a son; and *David*, as he was now in peace with God, and foresaw, in the spirit of prophecy, that this son would be a pacific prince, he called his name *Solomon*, or *Peaceable*.

And, as this son was conceived in innocence, in the happy season of God's reconcilment to his parents, and their establishment in true religion, by sincere repentance, and humiliation before him; it pleased God to accept him, in a singular manner.

Which

* The deflowering of *Tamar* by her own brother; the death of four sons, three of them before his eyes, and one by the hand of his own brother; the unnatural rebellion of one son, which brought him almost to the brink of ruin; the prostitution of ten wives, in the sight of all his subjects; and the successive, and signal massacre of his posterity; besides the distress of his own public shame, and infamy, added to, at least, one cruel disease.

Which is signified to us in the text, by that remarkable expression : *And the Lord loved him.* And, to manifest his favour to him, for the consolation of *David*, he conveyed his benediction to the son, by the same hand, which had before conveyed his chastisements to the father : he sent *Nathan* to *David*, to bestow upon his son, in his name, the most blessed of all earthly, the most blessed, but one, of all heavenly appellations, *Jedidjah*, or, *The beloved of God.*

C H A P. IV.

The Foolishness of wicked Policy. David, upon *Joab's* Exhortation, goes to the Siege of *Rabbah*, and takes it. Deposeth *Hanun* : and puts the remaining *Ammonites* (of *Rabbah*) to Death. His Conduct in this Point justified.

WHILST things stood thus with *David*, at *Jerusalem*, the siege of *Rabbah* still continued, being now far lengthened out, into a second year. *David* had hitherto gone on, with uninterrupted success, till his sins arrested his prosperity, and stopp'd him short. The truth is, all wickedness, besides those curses, and judgments it draws down from heaven, hath a natural tendency to defeat the wisest schemes, and check the progress of the best purposes ; as in the case before us : the *Israelites* were to make an attack, to fly, and to be defeated, that *Uriah* might fall : Could any thing more naturally raise the courage of *Ammon*, or depress that of *Israel*, than such a project ? Doubtless, there were many men in the army, accustomed to be led out to battle by *Uriah*, and those brave companions of his, who fell with him ; and brought back with victory, and glory : Would these men be easily brought to follow other, inferior, or untried leaders, with equal ardour ? Or would those *Ammonites* have any terror upon them, to meet those leaders, who had defeated, and

cut

cut off *Uriab*, and his brave companions? And did not all this naturally tend to deject *Israel*, and inspirit their enemies? Such is the accursed policy of guilt: selfish, and short sighted! And such the truth, and wisdom of that noble maxim in the schools, *That evil is not ordinable to good.*

The dejected spirit of the *Israelite* army, naturally tended to make their measures slower, and more cautious; and, of consequence, to draw the siege into greater length. However, the lower city, otherwise called the *Royal City*, or the *City of Waters*, was at length taken; and the upper city, although, in all probability, much stronger, from the advantage of its situation, on the top of a hill, could not hold out long, when its supply of water was wholly cut off. Of this, *Joab*, in all the generosity of a brave soldier, and all the affection of a faithful subject, immediately informed his king; exhorting him, That he would come in person, and put the finishing hand to the siege: *Lest I take the city, saith he, and it be called after my name.*

There is a gallantry, and a magnificence in this proposal, capable of creating admiration, in the meanest minds. The man, that could transfer the glory of his own conquests upon his prince, needs no higher an eulogy. And it is but justice to the character of *Joab*, to declare, that he is, as far as I am informed, supreme, if not unrivaled *, in this singular instance of heroism.

David readily complied with his general's monition; and immediately assembling *his people*, probably, those

* It is true, *Curtius* mentions a like conduct in *Craterus*, in relation to the siege of *Artacana* (lib. vi. cap. 6.); but this conduct of *Craterus* was evidently the effect of fear, not generosity. He well knew, that his master, *Alexander*, was the vainest, and most ambitious of all mortals; and, at that time, tyrannical to a high degree: and, therefore, he did not dare to take the city, before his arrival. *Alexander* now set up for a God; and so far aped that character, as not to give his glory to another.

those troops of his militia, then on the duty of their monthly course, he marched them to *Rabbah*.

And here I beg leave to observe, that *David* had, from the institution of his militia, greater advantages for continuing sieges, and being successful in them, than any other monarch, we read of in history : inasmuch as he could send a monthly recruit, of twenty-four thousand men to his army, without departing from the established order of his militia, or putting his people to any new trouble, or expence ; which could not but be a vast relief, to the weary, and wounded of the army, and raise the courage of the rest ; and, at the same time, a vast discouragement to the enemy, to have so many fresh men to encounter with, every month, whilst they themselves were, every day, in a more weary, and wasting way. And these I take to have been the people, which *David* took with him to *Rabbah* ; and with which he now, as the text informs us, *fought against it, and took it*. For if it were not to relieve the soldiers, who were on that service, there seems to have been no necessity of carrying new men thither, when the difficulty of the siege was over.

The reader will naturally observe, that this was an expedition, and a conquest, which came very seasonably to remove *David's* melancholy, to relieve his distress, to blot out the memory of his guilt, in relation to *Uriah*, and to revive his glory in arms. And if *Joab* considered it in this light, (as, in all probability, he did) the praise of his generosity, is still more ennobled in this view.

Rabbah was a royal, a large, and a populous city ; the metropolis of *Arabia felix* : watered, and, in some measure, encompassed, by the river *Jabbok*. It had its name from its grandeur, being derived from a *Hebrew* word, which signifies to increase, and grow great ; and was now in the height of its glory.

Polybius describes this city *, as built upon several little eminencies, on the top of a hill. It was a considerable city when *Antiochus* took it, yet it then only covered the top of the hill ; whereas it now, not only covered, but encompassed it. And, therefore, it is natural to think, that the taking of this royal city, brought *David* a great accession of glory, as, the text assures us, it did of wealth. For we are told, that he not only took a crown of gold, (adorned with precious stones) of a great value †, from the king's head, but likewise, that *he brought forth the spoil of the city, in great abundance.*

The king, *David* formally deposed ; and Dr. *Trapp* thinks, that the form of his depofal was, by arraying him in his royal robes, (and, probably, placing him on his throne) with his crown upon his head, and then formally divesting him of all his ensigns of royalty, somewhat in the same manner, that the duke of *Lancaster* deposed *Richard II.* concerning whom, Dr. *Trapp* adds this observation from his historian, *Never was prince so gorgeous, with less glory, or more grief.*

And it must be owned, that the text seems to countenance this opinion of Dr. *Trapp's*, in that expression, *And he took their king's crown from off his head—and it was set on David's head.*

The king now deposed, was *Hanun*, the son of *Nabash* : and inasmuch as we find *Shobi* of *Rabbah*, another son of *Nabash*, some time after this, in friendship with *David*, and shewing him signal kindness, at a season, when nothing, but friendship, could exact it from him ; there is all the reason in the world to believe, that *David*, upon deposing *Hanun*, made *Shobi* his viceroy at *Rabbah* ; and treated him, with signal kindness, upon that occasion.

We now come to that part of *David's* conduct, seemingly, the most exceptionable, after the affair of *Uriah* ;

* Hist. lib. v.

† A talent.

Uriah; and most bitterly objected to, of all others: and that is, the tortures, which, the text gives us to understand, he inflicted on the people taken in *Rabbab*: sawing some of them asunder, tearing others to pieces, by harrows of iron, and burning others in brick-kilns. Commentators also have been, in some measure, tortured upon this point: some interpreting the text, so as to clear *David's* character of the cruelty, seemingly charged upon him, in this account; others allowing the fact, but poorly vindicating his conduct, in that point; and others charging it upon the hardness of his heart, in that state of impenitence, in which they suppose him to have still continued, from his criminal commerce with *Bathsheba*.

Before I presume to pass any judgment, upon these opinions, give me leave to premise, that when *David* left *Shobi* in the government of *Rabbab*, it must be presumed, that he left some, besides female subjects, under his dominion: and, therefore, it is no way unreasonable to suppose, that, when *Joab* took the royal city, or *City of Waters*, it was surrendered to him, by the bulk of the people, who submitted, and were received into mercy: inasmuch as we find not the least mention, or hint of any one human creature's being either chastized, or put to death, on that occasion. May we not then naturally infer, from this silence of the sacred writers, that the king, who was taken in the upper city, retired thither, upon the surrender of the royal city, with the accomplices, and instruments of his tyranny; and that they only suffered the chastisements, due to their guilt, from the hand of *David*?

I now proceed to examine the opinions of commentators, upon this point.

And first, that *David's* supposed cruelty to the *Ammonites*, was the consequence of his having still continued in a state of impenitence, is an opinion, which, I think, I have already shewn to be wholly

without foundation : and altho' the other opinion, that he inflicted no capital punishment upon them, is, I think, justifiable * from the text, and hath been shewn to be so ; yet, that he did chastise them, with the severest kinds of death, generally understood by the text, I take to be the true opinion ; not only, because the text hath always been understood in that sense, by all *Jewish* writers ; but because I apprehend that conduct in *David* , to be more agreeable to the command of God ; the command of extirpating all the males of every city that resisted ; and the command of retaliateing, upon every offender, the evils he was guilty of.

That the punishments, now inflicted upon *Ammon*, were *Israelite* punishments, is not pretended : that they were punishments known in some other countries of the East, (in *Persia*, and in *Damascus*) is undoubted : that the *Ammonites* were monstrously cruel, cannot be denied. The *Israelites*, it is confessed, received all people to mercy, that submitted to them. The *Ammonites* refused the submission of the people of *Jabesh-Gilead*, (who offered to become their servants) upon any less cruel condition, than that of *thrusting out every one of their right eyes* §. If these were the gentlest terms, on which they would receive *Israelites* into protection, what treatment might they expect, if the *Ammonites* had obtained an unconditional dominion over them ? In short : this one instance (to say nothing of their brutal behaviour to *David's*

* The expression in 1 *Chron.* xx. 3. is, in our translation, *And he cut them with saws*. Now the word *them* is not in the original ; and the expression might, in my apprehension, be as properly translated, *And they* (i. e. the people whom *David* brought out of the city) *cut with saws*, &c.—In the second book of *Sam.* xii. 31. the text is, *And put them under saws*, &c. Now subjecting men to labour, may, as I apprehend, be as properly expressed, by putting them under it, as subjecting them to tribute is ; and is the known idiom of the *Irish* language, and, perhaps, of others.

§ 1 *Sam.* xi. 1, 2. The very expression carries the idea of the greatest cruelty in it.

David's embassadors) is in the place of ten thousand proofs, to demonstrate that people very monsters of cruelty ! What, then, can we so naturally infer, from this conduct of *David's* towards them, as that he now retaliated upon them, every instance of their own cruelty to others ? Nor can we have the least doubt of this, when we consider, that this was the established practice of the people of God, towards all those of their enemies whom they conquered. Let me mention two instances : When *Samuel* hewed *Agag* to pieces before the Lord, (sacrificed him to justice) his reason was, that he retorted his own murders upon him : *As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.* When *Judah*, and *Simeon* cut off *Adonibezek's* thumbs, and great-toes, he himself acknowledged the divine justice, in that righteous retribution, of his own cruelty upon himself, crying out, (*Judg.* i. 7.) *Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs, and great-toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me.*

I am sensible, that some short-sighted, superficial people have looked upon the *Jews*, as the cruellest of all conquerors ; little considering, that they were raised by GOD, on purpose to be a scourge upon every vice, and villainy all around them. And, perhaps, no imaginable method could be found out, more effectual to repress the enormities of a people, every way profligate, and utterly abandoned, as the *Canaanites* then were, than to raise up a people, eminently distinguished by the divine favour, and protection, to whom it should be an inviolable law, and a fixed point of duty to GOD, to chastize, in every man that came into their power, every enormity, which they themselves had committed ; and to retort, in a particular manner, their cruelties upon their own heads. For this was, in effect, little less, than if GOD himself had bared his arm, to take signal vengeance, on their monstrous enormities.

Now, it is beyond all doubt, that this was the case of the *Israelites*, in the midst of the abandoned world about them : and it is also, beyond all doubt, from *Psalms* xxi. unquestionably written upon this occasion, that this was the very reason of *David's* conduct, in the case before us : *Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right-hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven, in the time of thine anger : the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.* FOR THEY INTENDED EVIL AGAINST THEE : THEY IMAGINED A MISCHIEVOUS DEVICE, WHICH THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO PERFORM. — THEREFORE, *shalt thou set them as a butt, &c.*

And now, what was *David's* cruelty ? It was evidently this : He extirpated the vilest, and most detestable of all infernal miscreants, and monsters, the *haters of God*, and goodness. He inflicted those evils upon the *Ammonites*, which they were wont to inflict upon others ; and which they, at this very time, intended to have inflicted upon *Israel*. He punished the iniquity of their own cruel practices, and purposes. He executed that most equitable law of God upon them. And it is certain, that this alone were a sufficient justification of his conduct, that he made them suffer the evil, they meant to do *. A law, which it were the most valuable interest of mankind, to have equitably executed, in every society under heaven ! and would at once prevent more evil, and punish it in a more rational, and justifiable manner, than all the penal laws, that ever were devised !

To confirm this reasoning yet further. We should remember, that the *Ammonites* were early initiated,
into

* *Deut.* xix. 19. The law is here limited to the evil intentions of false witnesses, but the equity of it extends to all evil intentions whatsoever : *life must go for life, eye for eye, &c.*

into all the *Canaanite* cruelties : and, therefore, when I find *David* retorting their own cruelties upon them, I dare no more censure, or revile him, upon this head, than his enemies dare revile the people of *Agrigentum*, for burning *Pbalaris* * in his own bull ; or *Hercules* the hero, for sacrificing *Busiris* † upon his own altar. Or *Theseus*, § the hero, for fitting *Procrustes* to the dimensions of his own bed. Even heathen casuists have determined, that no law could be more just, than that which decreed the artists of cruelty, to perish by their own arts. What death then could be cruelty, to a people, who could thrust out the eyes of a submitting, unconquered enemy ? who ripped up the women with-child of *Gilead* || ? a people, who could bear the butchery of human victims to *Baalpeor* ? What saw, what harrow, or what brick-kiln, could be punishment enough to a people who could make their own children pass thro' the fire, and sacrifice them alive to *Moloch* ? And, therefore, whilst others, either from an affectation of more gentleness, and compassion in their nature, or the influence of false, and fantastic notions of mercy, consider *David*, in the character of a tyrant, exercising his cruelty in his conquests, I, for my own part, consider him, as *the man after God's own heart* ; inflicting the righteous vengeance of heaven, upon a miscreant race ; executeing that vengeance upon guilt, (upon these enemies of God, and good-

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ness

* The history of *Pbalaris*, and his brazen bull, is known to every school-boy, and found in every Dictionary. And the unlearned reader needs no more than to be informed, that this tyrant delighted to hear the groans of those he tortured to death, resemble the bellowing of a bull.

† *Busiris* made all strangers, that fell into his hands, a burnt-offering to the idol of his own cruelty. (*Plut.* in the life of *Theseus*.)

§ *Procrustes* had beds of different dimensions, on which he delighted to torture as many as he could. Those who were shorter, he stretched by a rack, and those who were longer, he lopp'd off to the length of his bed. (*Ibid.*)

|| *Amos* i. 13.

ness *) which *Saul* was dethroned for not executing : employed in an office, the most abhorrent from his nature, when viewed in the light of affliction to others ; and pleasing only, in the light of executing the righteous sentence of God upon guilt.

So when an angel, by divine command,
With rising tempests, shakes a guilty land ;
Such as, of late, o'er pale *Britannia* past,
Calm, and serene, he drives the furious blast ;
And, PLEAS'D th' Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm.

If I may be indulged a conjecture, another reason (or rather, circumstance) of this particular punishment, of making the *Ammonites pass through the brick-kiln*, I take to be this : it was well known, that the *Jews* were slaves in *Egypt* ; and particularly enslaved in brick-making, and clay, *Exod. i. 14*. It is natural with all people at enmity, to reproach one another, with the meanness, and baseness of their original. The *Ammonites* were a cruel, and insolent enemy, and nothing could be more natural to such spirits, when they had got any *Jews* in their power, than to cry out, *Send the slaves to their brick-kilns* ; and so torture them to death. And if so, nothing could be more natural, than for the *Jews* to return them the same treatment. And, very probably, it was in allusion to this reproach of their enemies, and to support his people under it, that *David* tells them, *Psal. cxviii. ver. 13. Tho' ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver*—That is, tho' ye were formerly obscure, and oppressed slaves, tied down to the drudgery of brick-making, and pottery in *Egypt*, you shall now be as glorious, as you then were contemptible. *Tho' ye have*

* *Psal. xxi. 8. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right-hand shall find out those that hate thee.*

have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers, with yellow gold.

And now it was, beyond all doubt, (as I humbly apprehend) that *David*, recollecting the late train of God's signal mercies, and deliverances to him, sung out the twenty-first *Psalms*, in a transport of joy, and thanksgiving: *The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head, &c.*

C H A P. V.

Tamar is ravished, and inhumanly treated, by her own Brother. That Rape is revenged by his Death. Absalom, who slew him, flies to Geshur. Nathan's Prophecies further fulfilled.

WHEN *David* had taken *Rabbah*, and all the other cities of *Ammon*, and punished all the unsubmitting miscreants, which he found in them, as they deserved; he returned, with all his people, to *Jerusalem*; but had not been long there, before another part of *Nathan's* prophecy, *I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house*, began to be sadly fulfilled upon him.

Absalom, the son of *David*, by *Maacab*, the daughter of *Talmai*, king of *Geshur*, had a sister by the same mother, of such singular beauty, that *Amnon*, another son of *David's* (the first-born of his family) by *Abinoam* the *Jezreelite's*, fell deeply in love with her: and being conscious, that his passion was very criminal, he concealed it for some time, but at the expence of his health, and happiness; racked by the violence of a strong desire, and the terror (or, perhaps, rather the despair) of indulging it. *Amnon*, saith the sacred writer, (2 Sam. xiii. 2.) *was so vexed, that*

that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin, and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. It is natural to think, that this passion is nowhere so wasting, and vexatious, as where it is unlawful. A quick sense of guilt, (especially, where it is enormous, as in the instance before us) strikes the soul with horror; and the impossibility of an innocent gratification, loads that horror with desperation. A conflict too cruel, and too dreadful, for human bearing! Witness the two most remarkable instances of it, found in history; that of *Antiochus*, for *Stratonice* his mother-in-law; and this of *Amnon*, for *Tamar* his sister. Indeed, that of *Antiochus* appears the less criminal of the two; inasmuch as he seemed determined to conceal his, to death*; and at the same time, to hasten that death, to prevent its publication, had not the sagacity of *Erasistratus*, his physician, discovered it. Although, possibly, *Amnon* had done the same, had not the importunity of his false, and subtle friend, *Jonadab*, the son of *Shimea*, *David's* brother, drawn the secret from him. He plainly perceived, that *Amnon's* disease was some strong desire ungratified; and insinuated to him, that he, who was a king's son, might give a loose to his desires, and despise the restraints of ordinary men. How vile was this advice! and how lamentable is it, that the heirs of royalty, whose virtue is of infinitely more consequence, than that of meaner men, should yet, be under more temptation to taint it, from the poison of infectious flatterers! How much happier was *Antigonus*, in the advice, and friendship of *Menedemus*, the philosopher; when being invited to a feast, where a very beautiful courtesan was to make a part of the entertainment, and asking *Menedemus*, What he should do? he answered, *Remember thou art a king's son, and shouldst do nothing unworthy of thyself!* *Jonadab* was of a character directly contrary to that of *Menedemus*: he was of that species of courtiers, mentioned

* *Plutarch*, in the life of *Demetrius*:

mentioned by *Tacitus* *, who can applaud all the actions of princes, whether good, or evil. And *Amnon* seems not far removed, from that character of *Domitian*, mentioned by the same *Tacitus*; that *he played the prince's son, in whoredoms, and adulteries*. And, therefore, it is no wonder, if *Jonadab's* detestable flattery § had its effect, upon such a spirit.

Amnon opened his whole heart to him, and told him his passion for *Tamar*—*I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister*; (he was ashamed to say his own); the subtle, and supple courtier, whose conscience was his least concern, immediately furnished him with an expedient, to gratify his passion. He advised him to take his bed, and feign himself sick; and when his father should come to see him, to beg his permission, that *Tamar*, his sister, might attend him, in his sickness, and prepare him some sustenance; which he believed he could take, if he saw it prepared, with her own hands. The desires of sick people, are often fantastical, and unaccountable; yet must often be indulged. The train took: *David's* paternal affection did not suffer him to be long absent, from a sick son, his favourite, and his first-born; nor allow him to hesitate, upon granting his petition. *Tamar* was immediately ordered to attend him, and did so accordingly; and, when she had learned, what food was most agreeable to him, set herself instantly to prepare it for him, with all the house-wisely skill of those simpler ages; where an utter insignificancy to all the purposes of domestic life, made no part even of a princess's praise. For the text tells us, that *she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes*; and added another preparation of them in a pan, and then

* *Annal. lib. iii.*

§ More criminal even than that of the *Persians* to *Cambyses*, in the like case, tho' not altogether so monstrous, as that of *Julia* to *Caracalla*.

then served * them up to him ; *but he refused to eat.* The insinuation was, That he was grown worse. And, to cover the deceit the better, he ordered every body to go out of his room, as if he could bear neither the sight, nor the noise of company. And, when they were gone, he desired his sister to bring the victuals, into an inner chamber, where he might eat unmolested. She, suspecting no evil, did as he desired. And when he found himself shut up with her, and sufficiently retired, from his attendants, he then threw off the disguise, discovered his wicked intentions, and quickly began to use violence with her ; from which, she, struck with abhorrence of the guilt, earnestly laboured to dissuade him, as from a crime, unheard of in *Israel*.——Would he expose a sister, to infamy ?——Would he expose himself, to indelible reproach ?——The plea for herself is inexpressibly beautiful——*And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go !* How shall I drive it away from me, and where shall I hide it ? And, finding that had no weight with him, she presses him, from the motives of his own shame, and infamy : *And as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel*.——You will, from this moment, be treated as a brute, and a fool ; lost to all sense of humanity, as well as virtue ; will be degraded from the honour of heir apparent to the crown, into the lowest degree of derision, and reproach.——

It is remarkable, that the *Greeks* called every thing that was foolish, by the name of *Venus* § : and, therefore, they denominated folly, by a word derived from her name †. And it should seem from this passage, as if the *Hebrews* had fallen into the same way of thinking. But the truth is, they were in a wiser way

* In the text it is, *And she took a pan, and poured them out before him.* Which makes it probable, that she fried them in oil.

§ Τὰ μωρὰ γὰρ πάντ' Ἀφροδίτῃ τοῖς ἑσπερίοις.

Hecuba in Troad. Euripidis.

† Ἀφροσύνη, or rather, from the radix of it, ἀφρότης.

way of thinking ; and denominated all sin, folly : which is its softest name. And, possibly, *Tamar* now called this guilt so, for fear of too much irritateing her brother.

When this would not do, she changed her tone, and tried to flatter him into forbearance. He was her father's darling, who could deny him nothing : he had only to speak to the king for her, and his request would certainly be complied with.—But he, deaf to all intreaty, as well as to reason, listened to nothing, but the impetuosity of his own brutal passion ; and, *being stronger than she, forced her.*

And here the flux, and reflux of passion in a brutal breast, is finely painted in the text. His brutality was no sooner gratified, in this instance, but it broke out in another as extraordinary. The tide of his blood was turned, and it now ran back, with as much violence, as it had pressed forward, before. *Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, saith the text, so that the hatred, wherewith he hated her, was greater than the love, wherewith he had loved her.*

Commentators are at a loss to account for this sudden, and excessive hatred ; and, indeed, there seems to be something extraordinary in it. *Tamar's* rape had an effect, upon her ravisher, directly contrary to that of *Dinab's*, upon hers ; but their circumstances were different : hope seconded, and supported *Shechem's* passion, not in itself criminal ; but despair drove *Amnon's*, into its opposite extreme. This is often observed to be the case with passions, too tumultuous, and unruly : *Amnon's* mind was first agitated by lust, and then by remorse, which drove to different extremes, like the vibrations of a pendulum. The horror of his guilt struck him, with a sudden detestation of *her*, whom he deemed the cause of it : he hated his *sister*, when he should have hated *himself*. God abandoned him thus, to the tumult of his own intemperate mind, to make this other punishment of *David's* adultery, more flagrant ;
and

and the prophet's prediction of God's *raising up evil to him, out of his own house*, more conspicuous. For *Amnon's* barbarous behaviour, now precluded all possibility of concealing his guilt. The moment his brutality was indulged, he commanded his sister out of his sight: *Arise, saith he; begone.*—To which she answered, That this second evil treatment was worse than the first. The first had passion to plead, and might be concealed, and repented of—the second was a designed, deliberate, indignity, that must draw eternal infamy after it. Therefore, she had reason to add, that there was no cause for it. She had given him no cause for aggravating his first offence, by loading it with an immediate, and public scandal, and indelible reproach, upon her, himself, and his house; upon the religion, and people of God. But he, as deaf now to decency, and humanity, as he had been before to all sense of shame, and conscience, called to his servant, that attended him, and bid him *turn out that woman from him, and bolt the door after her.*—The servant obeyed, brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

Tamar thus treated; not parted with, as an innocent woman, cruelly injured; but thrust out, as a prostitute, that had seduced to sin; is the strongest image of innocence, barbarously abused, and insufferably insulted, that history affords us. The greatest injury, loaded with the greatest indignities! contumely added to cruelty! Oppressed with sorrow, and overwhelmed with shame, *she put ashes upon her head, and rent her garment of divers colours, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying*; at once endeavouring to hide her shame, and despairing to conceal it.

In this condition, she passed on to her brother *Absalom's* house; who, seeing her confusion, and distress, easily apprehended the cause of it; and put the question to her, Whether her brother *Amnon* had been with her? covering the gross injury he suspected,

suspected, under the veil of the most decent, and distant phrase, that could hint his suspicion to her. And, as if all that had not been enough, to save her blushes, and let her see, that he understood her distress, he stopped her short, from attempting any answer, by begging her, That she would say nothing of the matter ; but endeavour to forget the injury, since it was a brother who had done it. *But bold now thy peace, my sister ; he is thy brother—regard not this thing.* But as all he could say, could not remedy the evil, neither could it relieve it ; which seems sufficiently implied, in what the sacred historian adds — *So Tamar continued disconsolate, in her brother Absalom's house.* And, in all probability, she continued so, her whole life long ; unmarried, and undone. And *Amnon* had the horror of reflecting, that for one moment's base, and brutal indulgence, he had made his nearest kinswoman, an amiable, and an innocent sister, miserable to the last moment of her life.

How many fine gentlemen are there in the World, whose greatest glory is founded upon achievements, too nearly resembling this ; at least, as far as the ruin of fame, innocence, and happiness, can create a likeness : and under circumstances, which no way lessen, (perhaps, aggravate) the guilt, though they may hide the horror !

How *David* repented this rape, we learn from the text ; which informs us, that he *was very wroth* ; but how he punished it, we know not. The truth is, it was to no purpose for him to punish it legally, and hardly possible to punish it equitably ; inasmuch as that could not be done, without at once exposing the infamy of his house, and cutting off the next heir of his crown. And how hard was it for a father to do this ? especially, a father, who was partly accessory to the guilt, by a very unguarded compliance, with his son's irrational request. The legal punishment of a rape, upon a virgin unbetrothed,

was

was a fine of fifty shekels of silver, to be paid to the father of the damsel, and an obligation upon the ravisher to take her to wife, without a power of divorce, *Deut.* xxii. 28, 29. The first of these penalties was insignificant in the case before us, and the second impracticable; because the marriage must be incestuous.

This case is also attended with another difficulty: The rape was committed in a city, and the damsel did not cry out; and in that case, I apprehend, the law of *Deut.* xxii. 23, 24. must be executed upon her. It is true, she was not a damsel betrothed, and, therefore, the letter of that law does not extend to her case; but the equity of it does, because the crime committed, and *Tamar's* offence against that law, was equally great, and *Amnon's* injury equally irreparable: consequently, had he been sentenced to death*, she must have suffered with him; and, therefore, *David* could not punish him, as he ought, without involveing her in his fate; and I apprehend it to be a rule of equity, rather to let the guilty escape, than destroy the innocent, and the injured.

But it may be asked, What becomes of the power of the *Sanhedrim* in that case? If that court was now in being, and *David* could protect *Amnon* from it, could he not as well have protected both himself, and *Bathsheba*? Consequently, how did he lie under any necessity of destroying *Uriah*, to screen either himself, or *Bathsheba*, from an infamous punishment?

I answer, That supposeing that court in being, and that *Amnon* could be punished by it as he deserved, and *Tamar* at the same time acquitted, (which could not be, unless they could take upon them to dispense with a law of God) yet, what court takes cognizance of causes not brought before it? And how could

* As he certainly must have been by the law of *Levit.* xx. 17. for uncovering his sister's nakedness.

could this cause come before it, when all the persons interested, in the prosecution of it, were, at least, equally interested, to conceal it; which was by no means the case in the affair of *Bathsheba*; whose husband was a very considerable man, (greatly provoked) and greatly allied, as will be seen hereafter. And, therefore, the two cases are, in my opinion, very different: great, and, as I apprehend, insuperable difficulties, obstructed the course of justice, in *Amnon's* affair.——

However, that guilt, which either human justice, or human infirmity, could not chastize as it deserved, the divine vengeance did.

Absalom, although grieved to the soul, for the injury done to his sister, and resenting it to death, yet so well dissembled his resentment, as not to take the least notice of it to *Amnon*. He carefully concealed his resentment, at once to hide his intention of revenge, and to make it sure; and hid it thus, for two whole years together; at the end of which, he invited his father, and all his brethren, to the customary festivity of a sheep-sheering: which *David* declined, on account of the unnecessary expence, to which it must put his son. Then *Absalom* begged, and pressed him again: *Howbeit he would not go*, saith the text; yet, to soften the refusal, he gave him his blessing. Then *Absalom* begged again, that *Amnon* (his elder brother, and heir apparent of the crown) might honour him with his presence. This too *David* declined, for some time; but being much pressed by *Absalom*, (to whom he could not easily refuse any thing) that he, and the rest of his brethren might have leave to go with him, *David* at length consented; and they went accordingly.

Absalom, now determined to make sure of his revenge, directed some servants, in whom he could confide, to attend *Amnon* at the feast, till the wine had raised his spirits, and taken him off his guard; and then to be ready, as soon as he gave the word,

to smite, and to slay him. They did as they were directed, and *Amnon* fell. — Thus did *Absalom*, at one blow, revenge himself upon his sister's ravisher, and rid himself of his rival, in his father's favour, and only obstacle (as he apprehended) to his crown.

When the fatal blow was given to *Amnon*, the rest of the king's sons, terrified at what they saw, started up from the table, seized every man his mule, and fled home, as fast as they could. But fast as they fled, fame reached the palace before them, and told *David*, that *Absalom* had destroyed all his sons.

This news, we may well imagine, threw the king into the utmost consternation: drove him seemingly even to despair. He tore his cloaths, and laid himself upon the earth, as one abandoned to distress: and his servants stood disconsolate around him, with their garments torn also; till *Jonadab*, recollecting himself, in his subtilty, and running over the train of his own thoughts, easily concluded, that *Amnon* only was killed; and immediately took upon him, to assure the king, that it must be so: *Let not the king, saith he, suppose, that they have slain all the young men, the king's sons: for Amnon only is dead: for, by the appointment of Absalom, this hath been determined, from the day, that he forced his sister Tamar* *. Now, therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead; for *Amnon only is dead*. Immediately the young men, who were upon the watch, gave notice that they saw a croud of people coming, by the way of the hill side. And instantly, *Jonadab* cried out to the king, That his sons were come — *And it came to pass, saith the text, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that,*

* What unparalleled impudence, and effrontery was this, to speak with such calmness, and unconcern, of an horrid villainy, which he himself had contrived, and of which he now saw the dreadful consequences! What a miscreant minister was this, and how much fitter to be admitted into the counsels of hell, than into those of *David*!

that, behold, the king's sons came, and lift up their voice, and wept; and the king also, and all his servants, wept very sore. And Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammibud, king of Geshur: and David mourned for his son, every day.

And thus did God, by withdrawing his restraining grace from Amnon, and leaving him a prey to his own passions, raise up evil to David, out of his own house: A daughter, ravished by her own brother; that brother, murdered by another brother; and that other, in exile upon that account: and soon to perish, by a fate yet more deplorable, had it not been more deserved!

And now began another, and more dreadful, prophecy of Natban's to be fulfilled upon David, before his own eyes: the sword was now first brought in upon his house, attended with this dreadful assurance, of never departing from it.

CH A P. VI.

Joab's Device, to get Absalom recalled, by means of the wife Woman of Tekoah, succeeds. Being brought back to Jerusalem, he is not admitted to the King's Presence, but remanded to his own House. What followed thereupon.

AB S A L O M's sheep-sheering was at Baalbezor, near Ephraim; about eight miles from Jerusalem. He fled, the moment his brother was killed: and, one may well believe, his accomplices fled with him; who, probably, were Geshurites, some of his mother's friends; and so were sure of the protection of Talmai, for revenging the violence, done to his grand-daughter. And there is no doubt, but they took their measures so well, that no pursuit from Jerusalem, had any been attempted, could overtake them. But David, who must be allowed to have been criminally indulgent to his children, was not of a disposition to revenge the death of one favourite

son, by that of another ; especially, when his guilt was no more, than that of revenging an action, in itself worthy of death.

The *Vulgate*, and *Septuagint* inform us, that when *David* heard of *Amnon's* crime, he was much enraged, but could not grieve his son's spirit, because he loved him, being his eldest son. It is true, this addition is not found in the *Hebrew* text ; yet it is, confessedly, very ancient, and, probably, but too true. And if so, he could but ill punish, in *Absalom*, the chastisement of that guilt, which his own seasonable chastisement of *Amnon's* earlier enormities, might have prevented. And in that case, his resentment must recoil upon himself, and acquit *Absalom*. And, possibly, this may be the true reason, why we hear nothing of any measures he took, to bring *Absalom* to justice, and why he mourned so much, and so long, for *Amnon*. For we learn from 2 *Sam.* xiii. 37. that he mourned long, and daily, for him. However, at the end of three years, his affection for *Absalom* got the better of a fruitless grief, for a loss which could not be recalled ; and he was comforted (saith the text) concerning *Amnon*, seeing he was dead.

And now, his concern was, to be so long robbed of the satisfaction of seeing another child, who was so dear to him : as if he had taken up *Rebekah's* complaint *, *Why should I be deprived also of them both, in one day ?*

In this condition, he pined, and languished, for his son : *And the soul of king David*, saith the text, *longed to go forth unto Absalom* ; as if his soul would have rejoiced even to have quitted his body, to go out, and meet him.

Joab quickly perceived the king's condition ; and thought, he should pay his court to advantage, if he could contrive to deceive, and surprise him, into a resolution of recalling his son from exile. To this purpose,

* *Gen.* xxvii. 45.

purpose, he instructed a woman of good sense, and great address, (from *Tekoah*, a distant city of *Judah*) who waited upon the king, in the air, and habit of a disconsolate widow, in mourning, and deep distress, on account of her son; whom his own family were pursuing to death, for having slain his brother, in an accidental contention, in the field. — The moment she appeared before the king, she fell upon her face, and implored his aid; *Help, O king!* — She then told him her case, and added all the alleviating, and distressful circumstances, that could move the king's compassion: The brothers were alone in the field, and none to part them; possibly, he might slay his brother, either undesignedly, or in his own defence. He was her only child, the only hope, and stay of her family; and if they cut him off*, they would leave her husband neither *name, nor remainder, upon the earth.*

The king soon felt her distress: the case was too like his own, to suffer him to be unmoved. He told her, she might return to her house, and leave the care of her business to him; he would give proper directions about it. But she, not having yet what she wanted, took occasion, from her seeming solicitude for her son, to continue the conversation. — She added, that if she had pressed his majesty to any thing in itself unjust, or any way misinformed him, or misrepresented the state of the case, she wished all the guilt of that iniquity, or misrepresentation, might fall upon her own head, and upon her family: *My lord, O king! the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king, and his throne be guiltless.* The king then bid her, if any body molested her

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* The expression in the original, is singularly beautiful, and expressive: *And so they shall quench my coal that is left.* And Heathen authors seem to have copied it from hence. So those few men, who survived the deluge, are called by *Plato*, and *Lucian* ζάρυρα, *live-coals*, who were to rekindle the vital flame, and continue the human race.

any more, to bring them before him, and he would take care to stop any further proceedings against her. She then begged, that in making that promise, to stay the avenger of blood, from causing any further destruction, in her family, he would remember the LORD his GOD: that is, remember he made that promise in the presence of GOD; drawing him thus, distantly, and insensibly, into the obligation of an oath. Her address had its effect: and the king, to convince her of the integrity of his intentions, immediately answered, *As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.*

Having gained this point, she then begged leave to say one word more. And having obtained permission, she immediately proceeded to expostulate with the king, upon his own conduct, and unkindness to the people of GOD, in not pardoning his own son, and bringing him back from exile. His mercy to her son, made him self-condemned in relation to his own; whose killing his brother was, in many respects, more excusable. She then added a very natural, and seasonable reflection — That death was the common lot of all men; some by one means, and some by another: That, in that state, *we are like water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered*: That GOD, if he pleased, could strike the offender dead; but inasmuch as he did not, it was, because he would leave room for mercy: That he had devised means in his own law, to arrest the avenger of blood; and, in his appointed time, to recall the man-slayer from his exile, in the city of refuge*.

But here, apprehending she might have gone too far, and made too free with majesty, in expostulating so plainly upon a point of such importance; she excused this presumption, from the force put upon her by her people; who had so severely threatened her, that,

* Where he was to continue to the death of the high-priest, Numb. xxxv. 25.

that, in this extremity, she plainly saw she had no resource, or hope of relief, but in laying her son's case before the king: which she, confiding in his majesty's mercy, and assuring herself, that he would hear her, with his wonted patience, and clemency, at length adventured to do; hoping, that it might be a means of saving both herself, and her son, from being destroyed out of the inheritance of God; insinuating, that her own life was wrapt up in his.

The king, observing the uncommon art, and dexterity of her address, in the management of this affair, immediately began to suspect, that it was a thing concerted, between her, and *Joab*. And previously charging her, not to hide it from him, he put the question directly to her; *Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman, not daring to disguise the matter any further, answered, and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand, or to the left, from tught that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab he bad me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thy hand-maid: to fetch about this form of speech, hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.*

Then the king, turning to *Joab*, (who was all this while in the presence) ordered him to go for his son, and bring him home. *And the king said unto Joab, Behold, now I have done this thing: go, therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.*

I am sensible, that the *Jews* are generally considered, as an illiterate, barbarous people; and the charge is so far just, that they despised the learning of other nations: but this, by no means infers them either ignorant, or barbarous. I own, they appear to me in a very different light; and although I shall not now insist, that the *Bible* is the fountain-head of all true politeness, and what is properly called good-breeding (as well as right thinking) among

mankind, (as I am well satisfied it is) yet I will venture to declare, that the single design, and address of this device, now recounted, are sufficient proofs, (if there were no other) to evince this people neither unpolite, nor uninformed.

But, to proceed ———

When *David* consented to recal *Absalom*, and appointed *Joab* to conduct him home, *Joab* bowed himself down to the earth; and thanked him, as for the greatest obligation, his majesty could confer upon him: *To-day thy servant knoweth, that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant: placing that obligation intirely to his own icore, which, he knew, was the greatest he could lay upon his master. A refinement of flattery, and address, not easily equalled!*

When this was done, *Joab*, saith the text, *arose, and went to Gesbur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem*: Well pleased, we may be assured, to be at once the messenger of his prince's mercy, to the heir apparent of his crown, and the instrument of their reconciliation: which could not fail to secure him a present fund of favour, with the father; and an equal fund, in reversion, with the son. But however, although the king so far forgave *Absalom*, as to recal him from exile: yet, when he returned, he ordered him to be taken directly to his own house; and forbad him to see his face. And *Absalom* continued thus, for two whole years, in *Jerusalem*, without being once admitted into his father's presence. A discountenance, and a rebuke, at least, little enough, to signify the king's abhorrence of his late cruel revenge, upon his brother; and, in all appearance, not more than was necessary, to mortify his pride, and repress his popularity; which now, in all probability, began to blaze out, upon the news of his reconciliation to his father. And this I apprehend to be the reason, why the sacred historian

rian subjoins, to this account of the king's discountenance, a particular description of *Abfalom's* beauty ; which is a natural, and common foundation of popularity : and then adds an account of his having three sons, and one fair daughter, (whom he named after his unhappy sister *Tamar*) which was also another fountain of pride, popularity, and presumption.

His beauty is thus celebrated ; That in all *Israel*, there was none to be so much praised, upon that score : and that it was without alloy, or abatement, from any imperfection : that *from the sole of his foot, to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him.* There is no particular mentioned, besides his hair : and the beauty of that is only implied in its quantity ; which was indeed prodigious ! weighing, upon the lowest computation, at least, three pounds : which might be easily estimated, by weighing what was cut off, in his annual polling, (for we are told he polled it annually, on account of its excessive weight) and examining, what proportion that bore, to what remained. And although a good deal of this may be accounted for, both from the usage of long hair, and the great quantity of oyl, then in use, which added both to the growth, and weight ; yet, it is evident from the text, that there must have been something in it, accounted very singular, even at that time.

Abfalom had, it must be owned, a very singular excellence of form ; but with that, nothing truly estimable, that we know of. His character seems nearly allied to that of *Aurelia Orestilla*, mentioned by *Salust*, who had nothing praiseworthy about her, besides her beauty.

This vain young man, weary with being so long detained, in that confinement, and obscurity, so mortifying to his pride, and so unfriendly to his popularity, sent a messenger to *Jeab*, to desire to speak with him ; in order to prevail upon him, to solicit his intercession with the king, to be admitted to his presence.

presence. And, on his not coming upon the first message, he sent a second. And when he found no better success, from his second message, he ordered his servants to set a field of barley, which *Joab* had contiguous to his own, on fire; and they did accordingly: which *Joab* resenting, went immediately to expostulate with him, upon the injury done him—*Absalom* answered, That, finding the messages he had sent him, ineffectual, he took that method to bring him to him; and gain an opportunity of sending him to the king, to intercede for permission to be admitted to his presence. For, if that could not be obtained, To what purpose was it for him to return from *Geshur*? He might as well have continued there, in exile still. In short, he insisted with *Joab*, that he must see the king, at any rate: *Now, therefore*, saith he, *let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.* His impetuosity prevailed: *Joab* was once more sent to intercede with the king for him: his intercession succeeded; and *Absalom* was admitted to the royal presence, where he did obeisance, humbling himself before the king, with his face to the ground. And the king was reconciled, and kissed him.

The reader, little versed in courts, is apt to be surpris'd, (as at first sight, I own, I was) to see *Joab* so zealous, to get *Absalom* recalled from exile, and to observe him afterwards so cold, and indifferent, to have him re-established in his father's favour.

The truth is, when *Joab* had greatly gratified the king, and gained credit with him, by bringing back *Absalom* to *Jerusalem*, he had little reason, as a minister, to be solicitous to bring him about the king's person, and restore him to full favour; because, in that case, he might naturally apprehend, that *Absalom's* interest with his father, might impair his own. This the young man's ambition could but ill endure; and, therefore, he took this extraordinary step, to be set right with his father. A step, which
shewed

shewed him determined to go any lengths, rather than fall short of his ambitious aims. He, that could set his friend's field on fire, barely to be admitted to court, would little scruple to set his country in a flame, (if I may be allowed the expression) to be raised to a crown: although, possibly, this injury to *Joab* might have been, in some measure, an artifice, to prevent the king's suspicion of their combination, and *Joab's* too great attachment, to the interest of his son.

As to *Absalom's* resolution of being brought to the king, even at the hazard of his life; it seems to be much less the effect of fortitude, than presumption upon his father's fondness. *Amnon's* most heinous injury to *Tamar*, being irreparable, well deserved death. And *Absalom* well knew, his father would not be extreme, for punishing it, as it deserved, out of form. The provocation was too grievous, not to excuse great irregularity in revenging it; especially, not to excuse it, in a son, so exceedingly beloved. And, therefore, *Absalom* might safely offer himself, as a victim to his father's vengeance, secure not to be sacrificed to it.

C H A P. VII.

David falls sick about this time. A Digression, shewing that his Distemper was, probably, the Small-pox.

THAT *David*, at some part of his life, was afflicted, with a grievous distemper, which he considered as the chastisement of God, upon him for his sins, seems sufficiently evident, from many passages in his *Psalms*, particularly, xxxviii *. xxxix. xl. and

* O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

Ver. 2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

xl. and xli. †. That this calamity fell upon him, about the time, that a dangerous, and rebellious, conspiracy was formed against him, appears from the same *Psalms*. And forasmuch as we hear of no more than one conspiracy, of that kind formed against him, it follows, that his sickness fell upon him, about this time. And that his distemper was that, which is now known to us, under the name of the *Small-pox*, is (as I conceive) very probable, from the same *Psalms*.

PSAL. xxxviii. 3. *There is no soundness in my flesh, &c.*

5. *My wounds stink, and are corrupt.*

7. *My loins are filled with a sore disease* (He was afflicted with violent pains in his back, or, perhaps, the weight of the distemper fell upon those parts) : *and there is no soundness in my flesh.*

8. *I am feeble, and sore broken.*

10. *As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.*

11. *My lovers, and friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off.*

PSAL. xxxix. 11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away, like a moth, fretting a garment.*

Now, I apprehend, that there is no other distemper, in which all these characters, universal foreness, and unsoundness of the flesh, corruption, stench, temporary blindness, (for such *David's* was) and loss of beauty, are at once united, except the *small-pox* : particularly, that loss of beauty, which is caused by reducing the skin into the condition of a garment, fretted by moths. And, surely, never was distemper characterized by a clearer, or more beautiful allusion, and image, than this.

This

† Ver. 4. *I said, Lord, be merciful to me : heal my soul : for I have sinned against thee.*

This will also be confirmed, by considering, that this was *Job's* distemper; and that *David* found himself in the same condition with *Job*.

That this was *Job's* distemper, (supposing it of the number of those known to us) is apparently clear, from that single character of it; that he was *smitten with boils, from the sole of his foot, unto his crown* *. The same thing is also apparently clear, from another passage, *Job* xix. 20. *I am escaped with the skin of my teeth*. His disease had stripped off all the rest of his skin, even that on the inside of his mouth; which sufficiently confirms it to have been the *small-pox*.

In this distemper *Job* complains †, that God had made him to be forsaken of his companions, and friends; that he compassed him with his archers; tore his reins, and blinded his eyes——*My skin is broken, and become loathsome* §; *he, (that is, man) as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment, that is moth-eaten. Thou hast made desolate all my company* ||. *My friends scorn me* |||. *His archers compass me round about. He cleaveth my reins asunder——My reins be consumed within me: he breaketh me with breach upon breach. On my eye-lids is the shadow of death* **. There are other circumstances (besides these last-mentioned) to prove this, to have been *Job's* distemper; but as my purpose in recounting these, was only to shew, that *David's* distemper was the same with his, I, therefore, recounted those only, in which they both agreed.

Now, the reader will find every one of these complaints, from the mouth of *David*, in the passages
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* *Job* ii. 7.

§ *Job* vii. 5.

||| *Ibid.* ver. 20.

† *Job* xvi. 7, &c.

|| *Ibid.* xvi. 7.

** Now, besides the poetic beauty of this expression, there is also a propriety in it, every way expressive of his condition in the *small-pox*; which deserves carefully to be attended to. The blindness was not from any defect, or distemper in his eyes, but from the closing of his eye-lids.

now quoted, and referred to : and, therefore, I think it clear, that his disease was the same with *Job's* ; that is, that it was (probably) the *small-pox* ; consequently, not that distemper, which the libertine world insinuate.

The same thing appears also, as I apprehend, from some of those *Psalms*, which *David* wrote, upon his recovery *. Thus in *Psalms* ciii. he blesses *God*, who bealed all his diseases, that his youth was renewed like the eagle's. Now, it is generally understood of the eagle, that when his feathers molt, and fall off gradually, and new ones succeed, his youth is renewed with his plumage †. Which carries no unapt, or unnatural allusion, to a man, whose old skin, rough, and scaled, with the *small-pox*, falls off piecemeal, and is succeeded by another, smooth, and youthful : although I am inclined to believe from the text, that it may also carry another allusion.

Commentators, in their comments upon this text, quote *St. Augustin*, and *St. Epiphanius*, as asserting, that when the eagle grows old, and that crooked, incrufted substance of his bill increases to such a degree, that he cannot eat, he strikes his bill against a rock, till he beats off his excess of beak, and is again in a condition to take food ; by which his strength is renewed, and with that, apparently, his youth. Now (if I am rightly informed) it is no uncommon case, in the *small-pox*, for men to have their

* These, as I apprehend, are four in all : *Psalms* xxx. ciii. cxvi. and cxlvi.

† Now, I am well assured, that these feathers fall by pairs, one in each wing ; and that those which fall at once, are the two feathers exactly corresponding to each other, in each wing ; and that this pair is renewed by a new growth, before the next pair falls. A plain appointment of providential wisdom, and goodness ! for by thus preserving the exact balance of the wings, which a very little inequality (the difference of less than half a feather) in either would destroy, the eagle is never utterly disabled from pursuing his prey ; though it be evident, he cannot pursue it, with full vigour, till all his feathers be renewed ; and, therefore, his youth is then said to be restored.

their mouths so incrufted with it, that they are utterly incapable of taking any food, or any fufenance, but from liquids; and that with great difficulty: but when that incruftation falls off, they are then in a condition to take proper nourifhment; by which their ftrength is reftored. And if that was *David's* cafe, then, is the beauty, and propriety of the allufion in the text, fufficiently evident. For then, might he truly fay of his God, *who fatisfied thy mouth with good things, fo that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

That *David's* diftemper was the *small-pox*, is, I think, again confirmed from another *Pfalm*; written alfo in thanksgiving for his recovery: I mean the *cxlvith*.

Let it then be previously obferved, that a man, confined to his bed, by ficknefs, may very properly be confidered as a prifoner; and, confequently, his recovery may be confidered, as a reftoration to freedom. Now fuppose a man recovered, from the *small-pox*, in which he was blind, and hungry; under an incapacity of eating, for fome time; in what words could that man, more naturally celebrate the goodnefs of God to him, than in thofe of *David*, in this *Pfalm*? Ver. 1. *Praise the Lord, O my foul.* Ver. 2. *While I live, will I praise the Lord, &c.* Ver. 7. *Which executeth judgment for the oppreffed, which giveth food to the hungry: the Lord loofeth the prifoners.* Ver. 8. *The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind; the Lord raifeth them that are bowed down.*

The reader will please to obferve, that the expreffion of *opening the eyes of the blind**, very naturally points out the condition of a man, recovered, from the *small-pox*; whose blindnefs arofe, like *Job's*, not from any defect, or diftemper in his eyes; but

* This fingle circumftance fufficiently evinces, *David's* diftemper not to have been that other infection, whose blindnefs is not temporary.

but from their being shut up, by the closing of his eye-lids *.

The same thing is, I think, yet further confirmed, from the accounts, which *David* himself hath left us, of the conspiracy formed against him, in his sickness, in the thirty-eighth, and forty-first *Psalms*. Now I will venture to say, that there is no sickness, incident to man, in which a conspiracy could be more naturally encouraged, and yet at the same time, so effectually discovered to the person concerned, as the *small-pox*, of the confluent kind, in which the patient is often observed to lie, for some days, seemingly, speechless, and utterly insensible; and yet, in reality, is sometimes sensible, and intelligent.

I have often heard a man, of known veracity, (yet living) affirm, that he very well remembers himself in that very condition, under that evil disease, in which he frequently heard himself pronounced speechless, insensible, and past all hopes of recovery; under this very singular, and happy circumstance, that he had a thorough contempt of the ignorance, and stupidity of all, who pronounced him in that state.

Now *David* says of himself, in his distemper, *Psal. xli. ver. 5. Mine enemies speak evil of me: When shall he die, and his name perish?*

6. *And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: and his heart conceiveth falsehood within himself; and, when he cometh forth, he telleth it.*

7. *All mine enemies whisper together against me: even against me do they imagine this evil.*

8. *An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him; and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more *.*

Here

* I know the expression is used in the gospel, in relation to our Saviour's miraculous cure of blindness: but there is no reason to believe, that any such cure was wrought, in the days of *David*.

* Some have imagined, that *David's* distemper was the *leprosy*;

Here we see, they whispered, and pronounced the sentence of death upon him ; imagining, that he neither observed, nor heard them ; though, in reality, he did both. But the same thing is yet, more clearly, and incontestably set forth, in *Psalm xxxviii. ver. 12.*

They also that sought after my life, laid snares for me : and they that went about to do me evil, talked of wickedness, and imagined deceit, all the day long.

13. *As for me, I was like a deaf man, and heard not ; and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth.*

14. *I became even as a man that beareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.*

From all these symptoms, and circumstances, now recounted, all which unite, and combine in the *small-pox*, and in no other distemper, that we know of, I think, we may fairly conclude, that this was the evil distemper, under which *David* laboured, when a dangerous, domestic, conspiracy was formed against him *. What that conspiracy was, (for we

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fy ; but they forget, that, in that case, he must have been deposed, as *Uzziah*, the greatest of his successors, was, and shut up in a *several-house*, where he remained, for many years, to the day of his death.

* I am well aware of a strong objection, that lies against this account ; *viz.* That the *small-pox* was not known in the world, till about eleven hundred years ago. I answer, That neither was the other infection, charged upon him, known in the world, till much later ; and, therefore, if this objection be strong against the *small-pox*, it is much stronger against the other.

I shall only add, That the history of this distemper, in the accounts left us, of *Job*, and *David*, might have been a very proper trial of faith, in those ages, where no such distemper was known ; as it is now a just confirmation of our faith, and a rational ground for believing the truth of these histories, which relate events, now ordinary, and indisputable ; which yet, for many ages, were credible, only to that *faith*, which is the *evidence of things not seen*, because altogether extraordinary, and inexplicable. But: it is objected, that *David's* distemper is characterized, by many symptoms, and circumstances, which cannot be

hear only of one) and how it was carried on, will be seen, in the next chapter.

When I had proceeded thus far, I judged it proper to submit this dissertation, to the perusal of a very learned, and judicious physician ; whose candour I relied upon, to be informed, whether any objection lay against this account of *Job's*, and *David's* distemper, besides those mentioned, in the last notes. His answer was, That he apprehended, if *Job's* distemper was not altogether super-natural, that it might be the *elephantiasis* ; and referred me, for further information, to *Arateus's* account of that distemper ; which accordingly I have considered, with all the care I could ; and find, there are many symptoms, in which these diseases agree ; and yet, they are, upon the whole, very different.

The *elephantiasis*, and *small-pox*, are both infectious distempers ; and men often fly from their nearest friends, when infected by them : the body is swelled, and the skin is broken, in both, and the breath

be referred to the *small-pox* ; particularly, pains in the bones, and ulcers in the loins. I answer, that distempers are often complicated, perhaps, beyond any thing that can well be computed, either from the principles of physic, or the observations of physicians. *David* had undergone great hardships, in his youth ; had lain long, and often, in camps, and caves ; and it is no uncommon thing, with men of that character, to feel pains, and aches, in their bones, in their advanced years ; and it is possible, that these pains, and aches might have been attended with ulcers, in his kidneys. The same effects might, possibly, arise from many other causes, which I cannot pretend to determine, or pronounce upon.

But it is objected, That *David* speaks of his sickness in the present tense, as if he wrote his *Psalms*, when he was actually under it ; which was impossible to be done, in the *small-pox*.

I answer, That no licence is more familiar to poets, than speaking of things past, in the present tense ; especially, when the description is enlivened, as it very often is, by so doing. And, I think, there is a particular beauty, in describing distempers, in that manner ; because it makes the distress present to the reader.—Besides, that several passages in the thirty-eighth *Psalms*, plainly refer to a time past ; particularly the 11th, 12th, and 13th verses.

breath tainted; and both are attended, at certain periods, with intense itchings; and both are vexed, with disturbed, and frightful dreams (as all feverish disorders are): and the *small-pox* is sometimes attended, with a difficulty of breathing, as the *elephantiasis* always is, with a kind of strangling: so far they agree. But here they differ: the *elephantiasis* never breaks out, thro' all the skin, at once, as the *small-pox* does; it begins with a burning in the bowels, and next appears in the face, which it swells, burnishes, and brightens; and from the moment it appears there, it is absolutely mortal; nor did any human creature ever survive it. In the *elephantiasis*, the eyes are cloudy, and become of a brassy colour; and the brows swelled, and let down over the eyes, like those of an angry lion. In the *small-pox*, the eye-lids are closed, and conglutinated, and the eyes not clouded, but absolutely darkened, as *Job's* were.

In the *elephantiasis*, the soles of the feet are cracked, but no boils, either there, or on the crown of the head, as *Job* had, and as is common in the *small-pox*. In the *elephantiasis*, the patients are slothful, and sleepy, from the beginning to the end: *Job's* distemper was sleepless, and restless, as the *small-pox* often is.

Job's distemper was attended with vomiting, with pains in his back, with loathing of food, and loss of skin: all these are attendants upon the *small-pox*, but unknown to the *elephantiasis*.

Job, indeed, complains of wrinkles, and it is certain, that the *elephantiasis* wrinkles the skin; but he complains, in the same breath, of being lean, and withered*; whereas, in the *elephantiasis*, there is an universal swelling: and, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, that this leanness, and these wrinkles of *Job's* were the effects of his sorrows, antecedent to that sickness, with which *Satan* smote him.

H h 2

It

* *Job* xvi. 8.

It were easy to add more proofs to the same purpose; but, I hope, those I have already urged, will be thought sufficient to evince, that *Job's* distemper was not the *elephantiasis*.

To conclude:

As rational conjectures are oftentimes useful inlets to knowledge, the candid reader will, I hope, be indulgent to this, in relation to *David's* distemper; which I am far from obtruding as a truth: for, after all, possibly, all his *Psalms* upon this head, may be no more than figurative descriptions of the state of his mind, sick with sin: nor is this supposition ill grounded, upon the 4th verse of the forty-first *Psalms*, before referred to: *Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.* And, agreeably to this way of thinking, we find sin figured out to us, in the prophetic style, under the ideas of *bruises*, and *wounds*, and *putrifying sores*, Isa. i. 6. But still, that he laboured under some real disease, (whose symptoms suit better with the small-pox, than any other sickness we know of) when this conspiracy was formed against him, is, I think, out of all doubt.

C H A P. VIII.

Abshalom takes the Advantage of his Father's Sickness, to form a Conspiracy against him. The Methods he made use of, to delude the People in his Favour.

ABSALOM had not been long restored, to his father's favour, before his pride, and popularity broke out, in an extraordinary manner.

It is sufficiently evident, from some passages in this history, that *David*, as his sons grew up, gave each of them some patrimony, which he left to their own management: (it was not then deemed beneath the dignity of princes, to be early initiated, in all the patriarchal arts of rural industry). Particularly *Abshalom*, we know, had flocks, and fields of corn; and it is probable, that his wealth increased in his exile,

exile, and confinement : not only, as his expences might be lessened, on these accounts ; but also, as his circumstances might be considerably bettered, by presents from his grandfather, and the royal family at *Geshur*, who, doubtless, considered him as the heir apparent, to the crown of *Israel* ; and accordingly encouraged, and enabled him, to support his pretensions, and to keep up a port, suitable to his dignity. And hence it was, in all probability, that when he was received into favour, he set up a magnificent equipage, *prepared him chariots, and horses*, and a retinue of no less than *fifty men, to run before him* : possibly, attendants, in appearance ; but, in effect, guards.

About this time, I apprehend, it was, that *David* fell sick : and *Absalom*, taking the advantage of that infirm, and distressed condition, to which he saw him reduced, laid the foundation of his conspiracy, or rather pursued the plan of his ambition, concerted at *Geshur*. Which, probably, at first, meant no more than to secure to himself the succession of the crown, in preference to *Solomon* ; for whom *David* designed it. And, seeing the king reduced so low, by his distemper, that his life was despaired of ; wicked as he was, he might think it better to wait the issue of it, than to embroil his hands in his father's blood. And there is no doubt, but the king, who (as we have seen in the last chapter) discovered the conspiracy, in his sickness, took immediate measures to defeat it, as soon as he found himself recovering. Nor is it improbable, that he dissembled his recovery, as long as he could, to prevent the effects of his son's ambition, and impetuosity ; who sufficiently appears, from the forty-first *Psalms*, to have been determined, upon his father's destruction, and fully resolved, to out-do the malignity of his disease, and cut him off, if that should spare him. For those, I am satisfied, are *Absalom's* own words, recorded by

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David,

David, at the 8th verse of that Psalm ; And now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.

It must, doubtless, have been matter of great surprize, and inexpressible affliction, to *David*, to find the two men in the world, whom he seems to have most loved, and confided in, combining against him, and compassing his death ; *Absalom*, and *Achitophel* ; his son, and his counsellor. And both of these are, as I apprehend, sufficiently, and clearly characterized, in the last-cited *Psalm* : The vanity, and lying spirit of *Absalom*, in these words, (*ver. 6.*) *And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity : his heart gathereth falsehood within himself : when he goeth abroad, he telleth it :* And the treachery of *Achitophel* in these, (*ver. 9.*) *Yea mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel * against me.*

Here we see a complaint, not only of trust betrayed, but the rights of hospitality violated : the man that did this, had eaten of his bread †.

In this exigency *David* had recourse, as usual, to the divine mercy, and protection ; crying out, (*ver. 10.*) *Thou, O Lord, be merciful to me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.* And, finding their devices so far defeated, as not to terminate in his immediate destruction, he gradually gathered hope, and confidence, from that delay ; which he quickly perceived, not to have arisen from any abatement in their malignity, but from the interposition of Providence, in his behalf (*ver. 11.*) ; *By this I know, that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me ; and as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.*

If it be urged, That all this is only a comment
upon

* Query, Whether this expression might not have given the first hint of the fable of *the Ass, and the Sick Lion* ?

† This shews the sacred regard to the rights of hospitality, among the *Jews*, prior to any thing we hear upon that head, in the accounts of the heathen world.

upon a *Psalm*, not grounded upon any historical relation; I answer, That this *Psalm* is plainly historical; is confessedly written by *David*, and personally applied to himself; and, consequently, must refer to some circumstance of his life; and can refer to no other but this; and, when applied to this, gives, as I apprehend, new light, to the sacred historian's account of *Abfalom's* rebellion.

Now the sacred historian informs us, (2 *Sam.* xv.) That, when the people resorted to the king for justice, on occasion of any controversy, which had arisen between them, *Abfalom* was early up, and intercepted them, as they came to the gate, where the king's tribunal was held; and, as they approached, inquired of each of them, What tribe, city, and family they were of, that he might proportion his compliments, and civilities, according to their quality, and consequence: caressed, and deluded them, with glosing lyes: pretended to inquire into the merit of their cause; and always found it good, and just: sadly lamenting, at the same time, that no man was deputed of the king to hear them: and earnestly wishing, that he were authorized, and in a capacity of doing them justice: — *O that I were made judge in the land, that every man, which bath any suit, or cause, might come unto me; and I would do him justice!* And what was this, in effect, but saying, *O that I were in my father's place, I would do justice!* — Plainly insinuating, that he would do, what others did not.

Now, we learn from the preceding part of this history, that *David* was wont to administer justice to his people, in person: Why then, does *Abfalom* lament, that no one was deputed of him, to hear the grievances of his subjects*? The reason is plain,

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from

* It must be owned, that this could only be meant of some important causes, and appeals, reserved for the king's hearing; for there were ordinary judges enough, to hear the ordinary course of causes.

from the forty-first *Psa'm*. The king was sick, and could not attend in person; and the people knew it: otherwise *Absalom's* calumny would naturally have been, that the king was grown proud, and haughty, and above his business; or else, old, and indolent, and negligent of his subjects.

Now, is it to be believed, that *Absalom* could carry on this train of delusion, and lyes, with the people, for any time, without the king's being informed of it? That is not to be imagined: the proceeding was too publick to be concealed. Let us then, take it for granted, that the king was quickly informed of it; and found, that a son, who visited him constantly, in his sickness, and pretended great solicitude for his health, was, at the same time, plotting against him; deluding his people with lyes, to his disadvantage; and wishing to be in his place; which was, in effect, wishing him dead. How could he more naturally express himself, upon that head, on supposition, that he knew all this, than he does in these words of the forty-first *Psal'm* (part of which hath been already recited); *ver. 5. Mine enemies * speak evil of me: When shall he die, and his name perish?*

VER. 6. And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity. His heart conceiveth falsehood within himself: when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.

But, suppose the king in health, and *Absalom's* crime no more, than that of shutting out complainants, from his presence, and then lamenting his neglect of administering justice; Could there be a greater villainy, than thus to abuse his father, and his prince, in his noblest character, of doing justice, and judgment? turning his most valuable talent, and highest merit, as a monarch, into the most crying guilt, a governor

* Here we see *David* speaks, *ver. 5.* indefinitely, of his enemies in general, being loth to brand a favourite son; but yet, in the next verse; he limits his reflection to a particular person, who could be no other than *Absalom*.

governor could fall into ! How execrable is ambition, thus building itself upon the basest ingratitude, and cruellest calumny ! *O that I were made judge in the land !*—exclaims the abandoned miscreant. Rare character of a judge, compounded of falshood, and flattery, inspiring rebellion, and meditating parricide, and covering his ambition, under the specious guise of an humble familiarity ! He would not suffer himself to be adored, as his father did ; but when any one came to prostrate himself before him, he prevented him ; and, before he could reach the earth, caught him in his arms, and embraced him : *When any one, says the text, came nigh to him, to do him obeysance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him :* rather paying court, than receiving it. As *Tacitus* tells us, *Otho* adored the people, stretched out his hands, lavished his kisses, and did every thing, in the most servile manner, for the sake of sway. *And in this manner, says the sacred historian, did Absalom to all Israel, that came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*

Absalom robbed his father of the affections of his people, as *Cyrus* the younger did his brother : but parents are more indulgent, more easily deluded, and induced to forgive, than brethren ; as will be seen, in the sequel of this history.

It must be owned, that *Absalom*, besides his arts of popularity, now recited, had two, great, natural advantages ; which, if they are attended with civility, never fail to win the affection, and veneration of the vulgar ; a graceful person, and an high birth ; being, at once, remarkably beautiful, and royally descended, both by his father, and mother. Besides this, *Amnon*, his elder brother, was dead ; and so, in all probability, was *Chileab*, inasmuch as we hear no more of him ; and *Solomon*, his only competitor for the crown, was yet very young. His father was too indulgent to him ; he saw him assume all the state of heir apparent to the crown, yet took

no measures, that we know of, to correct his folly, or repress his pride. And, therefore, it was not unnatural, that they, who favoured *Abfalom*, should presume, that his father, secretly, encouraged, what he did not, openly, controul.

Thus did *David's* infirmities concur, in executing the divine decree, of *raising up evil* to him, *out of his own house*.

C H A P. IX.

Abfalom breaks out into open Rebellion, and Achitophel joins him. David flies from Jerusalem, puts up his Prayers to God, and is supported in his Distress.

WE have seen, in the preceding chapters, *Abfalom's* intentions, of rebelling against his father : whose unexpected recovery, (under the influence of the divine favour, and protection) in all probability, broke his measures, for that time ; and made him postpone his wicked purpose. Nor can it be imagined, but that *David*, from that time, kept a stricter eye over him ; so that he could make no further progress, in his evil intentions. In the mean time, his popularity had all the field he could wish : as all the people of *Israel* resorted to *Jerusalem*, thrice in every year, on the three solemn festivals ; he had so often an opportunity of paying his court, and insinuating his poison, till the infection spread, through the whole body of the realm ; and wanted nothing, but a fair occasion, to display itself, in all its malignity : nor was this wanting long.

The sacred historian informs us, that *Abfalom*, under the pretence of a vow, which he had made at *Geshur*, applied to his father, for leave to go, and offer some sacrifices, at *Hebron*, that antient, patriarchal city, and place of his nativity. *Josephus* tells us, that this was done, four years after his father's reconciliation to him : which plainly shews
this

this to have been the reading in the text, at that time : as it also was, in the time of *Theodoret*, and still is in the *Syrian*, and *Arabic* versions, and many antient manuscripts ; although the *Hebrew* text now saith, that *this came to pass after forty years* ; without computing from whence they began *.

The nature of his vow is thus explained, by the sacred historian, (2 *Sam.* xv. 8.) who tells us, that *Absalom* addressed his father, in the following manner : *For thy servant vowed a vow, while I abode at Geshur, in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again, indeed, to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.* This vow, we see, is exactly conceived, in the piety of the patriarchal style ; and plainly implies, that, however he was tempted, by his grandfather, to serve the gods of *Geshur*, yet he continued steady to the true religion, and determined against idolatry : which *David*, we may assure ourselves, was highly delighted to hear, and accordingly, gave a ready consent, to the performance of his vow. But, from this very circumstance of *Absalom's* asking, and obtaining leave, we may clearly infer, that *David* held him, at this time, under some restraint ; which plainly implies, at least, some suspicion of him. The same thing is also, as I apprehend, sufficiently evident, from the companions, which *Absalom* took with him to *Hebron*, which were two hundred men out of *Jerusalem* : whom the sacred historian acquits of being any way conscious, to his conspiracy ; consequently, they were such as *David* could no way suspect. *They went in their simplicity*, saith the sacred writer, *and they knew not any thing.* Now, there can be no doubt, but that *Absalom* would much rather have taken some of those along with him, who were more intimately embarked in his interest ; but that

* Some compute these forty years from *David's* first anointment, to the crown by *Samuel*, which they think might then have been made use of, as the year of our Lord often is with us, without being mentioned.

that he knew, that could not be done, without awakening his father's jealousy ; and, perhaps, defeating his whole design.

There is no doubt, but *David* also took proper measures, to have him watched, at *Hebron* : but *Absalom* foresaw this, and prevented all the effects of his father's precautions ; for, before he left *Jerusalem*, he took care to send his emissaries, throughout all the tribes ; doubtless, under colour of inviting persons of distinction to the sacrifice ; but, in reality, to carry the watch-word, and signal, before agreed on, between them : That, as soon as they should hear the trumpet sound, they should immediately give out the word, at once, That *Absalom* was crowned king, at *Hebron*. By which means, the people rushed in, as a flood, and the conspiracy, like a contagious ulcer, broke out, and came to a head, almost at once.

The only person, mentioned by the sacred historian, as invited to the sacrifice, from *Hebron*, is *Achitophel*, the *Gilonite*, *David's* counsellor : whose arrival, from his own city, from *Giloh*, whither *Absalom* sent for him, seems to have given the finishing stroke, to the rebellion. For then, the sacred historian immediately adds—*And the conspiracy was strong ; for the people increased continually with Absalom.* *Achitophel* was too cunning to discover himself, till he saw all things favourable, and prosperous, on the part of *Absalom* : and they both very well judged, that his accession to the conspiracy, in those circumstances, was the likeliest means to ensure its success.

We may well imagine, that things could not continue long, in this condition, before *David* had a full account of all that passed : the danger was instant, and he took his measures accordingly. The city was not in a condition to sustain a siege ; and if it were, he did not care to expose a favourite city, built by himself, and the residence of the tabernacle
of

of God, to all the evils, incident to sieges, and, almost, inseparable from them. Nor, perhaps, did he care to trust the inhabitants of a place, so long exposed, to the taint of *Absalom's* temptations *. However, in appearance, he placed his resolution of leaving the city, to the score of his tenderness, and concern for it, and secretly, I doubt not, to his unwillingness to see the flame of civil war, lighted up in his country, which could no sooner be kindled, than it must, of necessity, devour some of his brethren, and, perhaps, his best subjects. In this distress, he immediately summoned all his servants, that were in the city; and said unto them, *Arise, let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us; and smite the city, with the edge of the sword.* He was well acquainted with the young man's impetuosity, and the madness of the people; and judged it better to give way to the fury of the flood, than attempt to stem it, in the fulness of its overflowing.

Accordingly,

* This, I think, appears from the fifty-fifth *Psalms*, which I apprehend to have been meditated, and poured out in prayer to God, upon the first discovery of *Absalom's* conspiracy. And from thence it plainly appears, that he had discerned the seeds, and workings of a conspiracy, in the city, and that *Achitophel* was at the bottom of it; and not only so, but that *David* foresaw his sudden, and sad end.

Ver. 9. *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence, and strife, in the city.*

10. *Day and night they go about it, upon the walls thereof: mischief also, and sorrow are in the midst of it.*

11. *Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit, and guile depart not from her streets.*

12. *For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have bid myself from him.*

13. *But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.*

14. *We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*

15. *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell; for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

Accordingly, he instantly quitted the city, with all his servants, and all his household (except ten concubines, whom he left to take care of the house); and dispatched them all before him, over the brook *Kidron*, directing their way to the wilderness; the *Oberethites*, and *Peletbites*, (of whom we have already spoken) and with them six hundred *Gittites*, who very providentially came to him to *Jerusalem*, (being banished from *Gath*) but the very day before, with the brave *Ittai* at their head (with all his family); whom *David*, knowing him fatigued with his journey, would, from a noble principle of generosity, (which preferred his friend's relief to his own safety) fain have persuaded to turn back, with his brethren; which he gallantly refused to do, vowing, that where-ever *David* was, *in death, or life*, there would he his servant be also. All these passed on before, and *David* himself, with his body of brave worthies about him, brought up the rear.

Among the rest of those who attended the king, when he left the city, and resolved to follow his fate, were *Zadok*, and *Abiathar*, the priests: *Zadok*, attended by all the *Levites*, bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD; and they set down the ark of God, before the king, as he stood to see the people pass over the *Kidron* before him: *And Abiathar*, saith the text, *went up*, (probably, to some eminence, to review the people, as they passed) *until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God, into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.* He sent back the high-priests, as knowing their character was too sacred, to suffer any violence, from the usurper, though he knew their fidelity, to his father: and for the rest, he wholly submitted himself to the divine disposal. He be-
sought

fought God, as *Alexander Severus* * told his soldiers, a generous, and a wise man should ; praying for the best things, and bearing whatever should befall.

David saw plainly, that God had raised this war against him, in punishment of his guilt, *That God had raised up this evil to him, out of his own house ;* and I imagine, I now hear him taking up the same lamentation, which *Alphonfus* the Wise, king of *Arragon*, afterwards did, upon a like occasion : *I wonder not so much at my people's ingratitude to me, as at my own to God.*

In this spirit of humiliation, *David* would not presume to have the ark, the symbol of the Divine Presence, borne before him, in that war : that was an honour, of which he deemed himself utterly unworthy. And, therefore, referring himself, and his affairs, with intire resignation, to the disposal of the Divine Providence, he remanded *Zadok*, and *Abiathar* back to the city, with the ark.

When *David* had given the reasons relating to himself, why he would not have the ark carried before him into the field ; he then adds a reason personal to *Zadok* : *Art not thou a seer ? Return in peace.* It should seem from hence, that *Zadok* was a prophet : however, as a priest, he was a teacher ; and, as such, bound to stay with his people, in the greatest exigencies, and instruct them in their duty. Besides, that by staying to do his duty, to his people, he might also do good offices, to his prince. And accordingly, *David* concerted a method, both with *Zadok*, and *Abiathar*, of corresponding with him, and sending him intelligence of all the enemies measures, by their sons, *Abimaaz*, the son of *Zadok*, and *Jonathan*, the son of *Abiathar*.

This done, *David* went up the ascent of Mount Olivet, his feet bare, and his head covered ; and wept as he went : and all the people that was with him, covered every

every man his bead ; and they went up weeping. And all the country wept, with a loud voice.—

How *David's* thoughts were employed, in this sad reverse of his fortune, I think, sufficiently appears from the forty-third *Psalms*. And, indeed, it needs so little sagacity to see, or ingenuity to own, that the meditations, there recorded, are peculiarly suited to this occasion, that commentators are agreed in the point : nor can any thing be imagined more natural to a man of his character, and under those circumstances, than that solemn appeal to the divine justice, against a vile son, and a wicked people, with which this *Psalms* begins * ; or the earnest supplication, for relief, and restoration, which follows it † ; or that lively expression of hope, and confidence, in the divine protection, which concludes it §.

If any reader should find any difficulty, in concluding this *Psalms*, to have been meditated upon this occasion ; let him reflect, whether there can be any thing extraordinary in supposing some memorial, to have been left to us of *David's* meditations, upon an occasion so very extraordinary ; for, surely, a more memorable event, was never recorded in history ; nor a more moving spectacle, ever exhibited to mortal eyes ! A king, venerable for his years, and victories ; sacred in the characters, both of his piety, and prophecy ; renowned for prowess, and revered for wisdom ; reduced to the condition of a fugitive ! to a sudden, and extreme necessity

* *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation : O deliver me from the deceitful, and unjust man.*

Ver. 2. *For thou art the God of my strength. Why dost thou cast me off ? Why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy ?*

† Ver. 3. *O send out thy light, and thy truth ; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.*

4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God, my exceeding joy : yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.*

§ Ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? And why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

necessity of flying for his life, from the presence of his own son, his darling, and delight ! and a whole country loudly lamenting his fate !

In this condition, *David* went up the *Mount*, and, when he reached the summit of it, fell down prostrate * before *God* : and again put up his prayers, for protection, and deliverance, to that mighty Being, *who stilleth the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people* ; chiefly, (as it is generally believed) in the words of the third *Psalms* : and was immediately inspired with that consolation, and strong confidence of conquering his enemies, recorded in the close of it, and, in all probability, poured out that moment, in the presence of all his people :—*Arise, O Lord ; save me, O my God ; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone. Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord : thy blessing is upon thy people.*

As *David* was going up the *Mount*, word was brought him, that *Achitophel* was among the conspirators : and the moment he heard it, he put up his humble, and earnest supplication to that *God*, *who leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools* † : *O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Achitophel into foolishness.* And when he had finished his devotions upon the *Mount*, it pleased *God* to furnish him, at that moment, with the means of effecting what he prayed for : for, behold, *Hushai*, the *Archite*, *David's* friend, came, that instant, to meet him, *with his coat rent, and earth upon his head* : and *David's* good genius suggested to him, the same in-

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stant,

* *Josephus* tells us, that when *David* reached the top of the mountain, he took a view of the city, and prayed to *God*, with abundance of tears. The candid reader will, perhaps, think it worth his notice, that *Josephus* should tell us, That *David* wept, and viewed the city, in the same spot, from which, the evangelist informs us, that our blessed Saviour wept over it.

† *Job* xii. 17. also ver. 20. *He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged.*

stant, the most probable method of defeating the devices of *Achitophel*, by the means of his friend.

Hushai was famous in the cabinet, but unpractised in the camp: *David*, therefore, told him, That if he should go with him into the field, he would be a burden to him (he would but add to the number of his household, not his soldiers); saying, That he himself had no sure resource, or means of support; but if he would return to the city, and submit to *Absalom*, he might be a means of defeating the counsels of *Achitophel*, in his prince's favour; and, at the same time, have an opportunity of letting him into all the secrets of the enemy, by informing *Zadok*, and *Abiathar* of every thing that passed, who would transmit the account by their sons. Accordingly, *Hushai* returned to *Jerusalem*, and reached the city, soon after *Absalom* had entered it.

C H A P. X.

Ziba's treachery to Mephibosheth, and David's too hasty grant of his supposed forfeiture. Shimei curses David, who will not suffer him to be chastised. The Curses in the Psalms accounted for, from this Passage. Hushai insinuates himself into Absalom's Favour, and, by defeating Achitophel's Advice, saves David.

WHEN *David* knew with certainty, that *Achitophel* was among the conspirators, he saw his danger in all its strength. A hot-headed, young man, high in vanity, extravagant in hope, and easily overset with success, was not an object of much terror, to a man of *David's* great experience, and consummate wisdom: but the prowess, popularity, and numbers of such a man, conducted by the calm skill, and prudence of an *Achitophel*, was sufficient matter of just fear. *David*, however, sunk not under it; but had recourse, as usual, to the protection of that God, who only could deliver him, and who had
never

never failed him in distress; beseeching him to confound, and infatuate the counsel of *Achitophel*. *Achitophel* was one of those prime politicians, (as they are deemed) who are often accounted wiser than others, merely because they are more wicked; for, having no restraint of conscience, or fear of God, they can often advise, and sometimes effect, what others cannot, that is, dare not; and are, therefore, by such as judge only of things, by their present advantage, or expediency, admired as sage, and sagacious; but are, in the account of all-seeing, and unerring Wisdom, numbered among those, whose wisdom is foolishness, and the end thereof are the ways of death.

David well knew, that the evil course, in which *Achitophel* was embarked, could only be conducted, by wicked measures; and, therefore, it was a duty of true religion, to beseech God to confound his counsels. And the most probable human means of effecting this, was, as he judged, by opposing the counsels of *Hushai* to them: and he proceeded, accordingly.

When *David* had given his instructions to *Hushai*, and the priests, he pursued his march, towards the wilderness, and resolved to get out of the reach of the impending storm, as fast as he could, and shun its first fury, at any rate, well knowing, that to gain time, was to gain a thousand means of dispersing it. He had passed but a little way, beyond the summit of *Mount Olivet*, before *Ziba* came up with him, with two asses saddled, and heavy laden with bread, and fruits, and wine*. Among the rest are mentioned, *an hundred bunches of summer-fruits*, which are very reasonably supposed to be the early fig: consequently, this flight of *David* was about the beginning of summer: at which time, a present of fruits must have been very seasonable, and refreshing. The

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* 2 Sam. xvi. 1. Two hundred loaves of bread, an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer-fruits, and a bottle of wine.

king asked *Ziba*, What he meant by these things? probably, imagining, that they were a present from *Mephibosheth*. For, when *Ziba* answered, That the asses were for the service of his majesty's household; and the wine, and fruits, for the refreshment of such of them, as might be weary, and faint, in the wilderness; the king immediately replied, *And where is thy master's son?* To which, that artful, false villain, immediately answered, That he staid in the city, in hopes that this commotion might calm, after some time, and end, in a revolution in his favour. *David*, too rashly credulous, although of an unsuspected servant, against the son of a tried friend, and too hastily resenting his imagined ingratitude, immediately concluded *Mephibosheth* a traitor, who had forfeited his whole fortune, and, accordingly, bestowed the forfeiture upon his informer — *Thine*, says he to *Ziba*, *are all that pertained to Mephibosheth* — verifying that fine observation of *Seneca*, *That kings give many things with covered eyes, especially, in time of war.* To that sudden, and great grant, the gluttonous flatterer made no other return, than an humble, and earnest supplication, for the continuance of his majesty's favour to him: *I humbly beseech thee, that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king* — As if he scarcely felt, that he was rewarded for his calumny, for which he well deserved to have been racked.

When the king reached *Baburim*, the next village, in his way to the wilderness, *Simei*, the son of *Gera*, of the family of *Saul*, came out, and cursed him to his face, with repeated curses: and, not contented with cursing, he cast stones at him, and at all his servants, that attended him; treating him, with as much indignity, as he would a dog; bidding him *get out, bloody man* as he was, and *a man of Belial*: adding, That God had now brought vengeance upon him, for all the blood of the house of *Saul*, and had now delivered the throne, which he had usurped,

usurped, into the hand of his son *Abshalom* : That he was caught in his own wiles, because he was a bloody man. This, surely, was one of the severest trials of patience, that ever human magnanimity endured. The accusation was notoriously false, and the king could, for that reason, bear it the better ; but his servants saw it not, in the light of their master's equanimity, but his enemy's insolence. *Abishai*, David's nephew, could not bear it ; but begged the king's permission to take off the traitor's head, that uttered it : which *David* absolutely refused, and added a rebuke, to his refusal — *What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiab ? So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who then shall say, Wherefore, hast thou done so ?* Here we have, in three words, a clear comment upon all the curses, throughout *David's Psalms* : they are all prophetic denunciations of divine vengeance. *David* cursed, because God commanded him : and how could he tell, but *Shimei* had the same commission, to curse him ; although, perhaps, in his rage he exceeded it ? He knew himself innocent of the blood of *Saul*, now charged upon him ; but, at the same time, he knew himself guilty of the blood of *Uriah* : and who knew, whether this was not part of the vengeance due to it ?

The king then turning to *Abishai*, and the rest of his servants, who were about him ; asked them, How it could be surprising to see a *Benjamite* revile him, when they beheld his own son, in rebellion against him, and seeking his life ? This however, strange as it was, was evidently the work of God ; who had declared, he would raise up evil to him, out of his own house (and did so, by permitting the son's guilt to chastise the father's) ; and, therefore, he concluded, the other was so too : and, in that persuasion, he peremptorily commanded his servants ; *Let him alone, let him curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him.* He then immediately added — *It may be, that*

the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good, for his cursing, this day. Although this was a chastisement from God upon him, yet if he bore it as became him, it might become a means of mercy to him. His humble submission, and resignation, might call down the divine commiseration, upon his patience, and penitence. *David's* patience but more inflamed *Shimei's* insolence. And, as *David*, and his servants marched along, *Shimei* kept pace with them, upon the side of an adjacent hill; and still continued cursing, reviling, and throwing dust, and stones, unchastised. *David* endured it all: *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; When he suffered, he threatened not; but committed his cause to Him, who judgeth righteously* *. How far he was, in this instance, an emblem of his suffering Son, is not, I hope, hard to discern, or adventurous to assert. But, as it is no part of my purpose to pursue this parallel, I forbear; and only beg leave to add, that this passage is a strong instance to shew, how strict, and exemplary a discipline, reigned throughout *David's* forces. I own, I have some doubt, whether a body of *European* officers, encompassing their general, so treated, would wait his orders to dispatch the reviler.

How far *David* marched, before he, his family, and his forces, took any refreshment, is no where mentioned, by the sacred writer: but this defect is supplied, by *Josephus*, who gives us to understand, that he suffered his people to take no refreshment, till they reached the banks of *Jordan*. Here then, let us leave him for a while, and return to *Absalom*.

When *David* quitted *Jerusalem*, it was upon a persuasion, that *Absalom* would make all the haste he could, to possess himself of the capital, and, if possible, to surprise his father in it. And, as he judged, so it came to pass; for he, and all his people, immediately marched to *Jerusalem*, and *Achitophel* with him.

* 1 Pet. ii. 23.

him. And it should seem, from the sacred historian, that they arrived there, a considerable time, before *David* reached the banks of the *Jordan*. For when *Hushai* came to the city, he found *Absalom* in quiet possession, and just going to call a council, upon the present posture of affairs. *Hushai*, mindful of his instructions, lost no time to pay his court, and profess his allegiance: but immediately coming up to *Absalom*, addressed him, in the customary form of salutation to kings; or rather, with a seemingly peculiar zeal for his service, he redoubled the salutation; *God save the king! God save the king!* *Absalom*, amazed at what he heard, upbraided him with his ingratitude, in deserting *David*——and asked him? *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* He did not dare to say, To my father, (for that question would have carried a heavier reproach upon himself) and, therefore, he mentioned only the relation, which *Hushai* had to *David*; and, dwelling upon that, asked him, Why he went not with his friend? In answer to which, *Hushai* gave him to understand, that his allegiance was governed by other principles, than those of private friendship; that the appointment of God, and the election of his people, determined him in the object of his duty: and what should hinder him from serving the son, with as much fidelity, as he had served the father? The attentive reader will, I am persuaded, find this salutation, and whole apology, as evidently evasive, and calculated to delude, as art could contrive them; for he neither prays personally for *Absalom*, nor professes allegiance to him; yet the bait took, and *Absalom*'s self-sufficiency, gross as the delusion was, swallowed it whole. And *Hushai* (who was considered as a good courtier, that followed fortune) was immediately admitted of his council, though not of his cabinet. The consultation then began, What was to be done next? And *Achitophel*, the arch-counsellor, immediately advised *Absalom* to go in to his father's concubines, which he

had left to keep the house, before the face of all *Israel*; an action which would demonstrate his enmity to his father, irreconcilable; and, consequently, such as would firmly attach all those to his interest, who were disaffected to *David*, when they once saw, they were out of all danger of being sacrificed to any future, possible reconciliation, between the father, and son. An advice, for the present, and in appearance, wise, but, in reality, pernicious. Could not this long-headed, sagacious statesman foresee, that this action, for which some men would now become more attached to *Abshalom*, must one day make him detestable, in their eyes, when they reflected upon the horror of it? A guilt, made mortal, by the law of God*, and not named, even among the *Gentiles*; a guilt, for which they must one day judge him more worthy to lose his crown, than *Reuben* his birth-right†. However, this hellish advice was immediately embraced; for *Achitophel's* advice was then deemed as unerring, as if the oracle of God had dictated it §. A tent was immediately spread upon the house top, and *Abshalom went in unto his father's concubines, in the sight of all Israel*. An action of such profligate impiety, and abandoned impudence, as it were to be wished no sun had seen, or history related. Then was *David's* adultery (planned, and, it may be, perpetrated in the same place) judicially chastised, and God's vengeance, denounced upon it by his prophet, signally executed; and his wives prostituted, *in the sight of the sun* ||, 2 Sam. xii. 11. But before this was done, *Achitophel* advised, that twelve thousand choice men might be put under his command, with whom he would undertake to pursue,

* Levit. xx. 11.

† 1 Chron. v. 1.

§ 2 Sam. xvi. 23.

|| N. B. The Hebrew word, which is here rendered *wives*, is, in the fifteenth chapter of the second book of *Samuel*, verse 36th, translated *women*; and, therefore, whoever attends to the original, will find *Nathan's* prophecy, upon this point, literally accomplished.

see, and attack *David*; which he must do to great advantage, when he should come upon him, *weary, and weak-banded*, as he himself expressed it, which could scarcely fail to strike a terror, into the few forces, which attended him: and when they fled, the king would become an easy prey. He then added, that he would smite the *king only*, and proclaim pardon to all the rest; by which means, he would easily bring over their allegiance to *Absalom*, and lead them all back, in submission to him; or, if they were not immediately brought back, yet, the killing of the king would effectually end the contest: *I*, says he, *will smite the king only. And I will bring back all the people unto thee. The man whom thou seekest, is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace.*

The attentive reader will easily perceive, that this advice well justified the character given of him, in the scripture: it was, in its several parts, admirably fitted, both to the inclinations, and interest of his pupil: he consigned him to his pleasures, and took all the danger to himself: and, at the same time, he relieved his little remains of humanity, (if he had any) from the necessity of embruing his hands in his father's blood. His incest was, for the present, personal guilt enough: that act of outrage would make *Absalom's* reconciliation with his father, desperate: and whilst he indulged his evil appetite, *Achitophel*, with a chosen band, would pursue, and surprise *David*. Nothing could be more worldly wise, or more hellishly wicked; it was, indeed, as the advice of an oracle, but very different, from that dictated by the Spirit of God. And yet, horrid as it was, it pleased that vile son, and his associates: *And the saying pleased Absalom well,* (says the sacred writer) *and all the elders of Israel.* However, for greater security, *Absalom* resolved to advise with *Hushai* also, whose counsel he knew was of great weight, with his father: and accordingly, sending for him, and telling

telling him what *Achitophel* advised, in relation to the attempt upon his father, he desired to know his opinion upon that point. To which *Hushai*, continuing his train of delusion, answered with great subtilty, and address, *The counsel that Achitophel hath given, is not good at this time.*

The apparent sense of this equivocation was, that however, that great counsellor excelled in other instances of wisdom, yet in this he failed. He then set himself to oppose every article of *Achitophel*'s advice, some openly, and others covertly, with signal dexterity, and plausibility of reason. He began with making a lively, and dreadful description of the enemies *Abfalom* had to deal with : that *David*, and his worthies, who attended him, were all mighty men of war ; at all times terrible to the bravest foes ; but much more so at this time : when being driven from their families, they were as so many enraged bears, robbed of their whelps ; and when, in the first furious efforts of their rage, they should strike a terror into their invaders, which they would not fail to do, the panic would easily be diffused through the rest of their pursuers, and intimidate the bravest of his forces. Besides all this, the project of surprising *David* was very little considered ; he was a man too guarded for such an attempt ; and was, before that time, well secured in some secret, and separate retreat, (for all such were well known to him) out of the reach of surprize. His advice, therefore, was, that *Abfalom* should wait, till he had a complete army, made up of the bravest men of all the tribes, to which every thing must yield ; headed by *Abfalom* himself in person (insinuating that the glory of the victory belonged to him alone, and that nobody should pretend to rob him of it). And whereas, it was urged by *Achitophel*, that he would smite the king only, as if all *Abfalom*'s ends were to be attained by his death ; *Hushai* insinuates, that the death of competitors was as necessary, as that of the king, at least,

least, his death, who was divinely designed for the throne. And, therefore, he adds, that they should come upon *David*, where he could not be concealed, and whence he could not escape *, *nor any one of those that were with him*: and that if he refuged himself, for more security, in any one of the cities of *Israel*, they would have numbers enough to pull it down, stone by stone, about his ears. The expression in the original is very remarkable: *Then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river*. The meaning of which threat I apprehend to be this: That they would come before that city, with those cranes †, or hooks, which the ancients were wont to throw upon the battlements of walls; and with which, by the help of ropes fastened to them, they were wont to pull them down piece-meal, into the rivers, or trenches, (filled with water) which encompassed them. As *Achitophel* proposed all imaginable advantage, to the evil cause he was engaged in, from expedition, upon that principle mentioned by *Tacitus*, That nothing determines civil discords, so happily as dispatch; *Hushai*, on the contrary, wholly laid himself out to protract, and to delay. For delay would not only ward off *David's* present danger; but would also, as the same *Tacitus* observes, give ill men time to repent, and the good to unite. And it is certain, that in all contests of this kind, that remark of *Livy* will always hold good, That when men have time to think, there will never be

* The original text is, in this place, very beautiful, and expressive: *So shall we come upon him in some place, where he shall be found, and we will light upon him, as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him, and of all the men that are with him, there shall not be left so much as one*. The dew in *Palestine* (as in several other climates) falls fast, and sudden; and is, therefore, no unapt emblem of an active, expeditious soldiery: and it was, perhaps, for this reason, that the *Romans* called their light-armed forces *rorarii*. The dew falls upon every spot of the earth; not a blade of grass escapes it. A numerous army resembles it in this respect; it is able to search every-where.

† See *Rollin's History*, Vol. xii. Plate the 25th explained.

be wanting, who will be glad to gain the favour of the right side, by adhering to the publick good. These were the principles of *Hushai's* advice ; and his advice, as much better suited to *Absalom's* cruelty, as well as his vanity, and, seemingly, to the interest of his ambition, as well as the safety of his followers, (who cared to put nothing to the hazard of a small party) easily prevailed : for so it seemed good to Almighty God, to infatuate the counsels of *David's* enemies, and defeat their devices.

C H A P. XI.

Hushai sends David Intelligence, of all that passed, in Absalom's Council, earnestly intreating him to pass over Jordan, that very Night ; which was done, accordingly. Achitophel's sudden, and sad End. Mr. Bayle's important Decision, upon Hushai's Deception of Absalom, considered, with all the Deference due to it.

ABSALOM's council had no sooner broken up, than *Hushai* hastened to *Zadok*, and *Abiathar*, to inform them of what passed ; and to advise them, to send *David* immediate intelligence of it ; adding this particular caution, and advice from himself, to the king, That he should, by no means, think of resting, all night in the wilderness ; but make all possible dispatch, to pass the *Jordan*, with his household, and all his forces : *Lest the king, says he, be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him.*

Now *Jonathan*, and *Abimaaz*, who were to carry the intelligence, had not yet returned into the city ; but found some pretence for tarrying without the walls, at a place called *En-rogel*, or *The Fuller's Fountain* ; and, probably, upon some pretence of washing, and cleansing themselves, from some legal pollution. And their fathers had no way of communicating *Hushai's* advice to them, but by the means of a girl, whom, doubtless, they knew to be
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intelligent, and faithful; and such a person, being a safe messenger, must, in all probability, have been a very proper one, because least liable to be suspected; for what could be less so, than a girl, going to a well, where such persons have calls at all times? However, notwithstanding all their caution, they were observed by a lad, (who informed *Absalom*), and immediately pursued. *Jonathan*, and *Abimaaz* made the best of their way, with all possible dispatch, towards *David*: but, finding themselves hotly pursued, they fled to a friend's house in *Baburim*; who having a well in his court-yard, which, probably, was then dry, or, at least, not very deep, they went down into it; where a woman, covering the well, and spreading some ground corn over it, as it were to be sunned, and dried, effectually concealed them. *Absalom's* messengers were close at their heels; and inquiring of the woman where *Jonathan*, and *Abimaaz* were, (which sufficiently implies, that they had seen them turn into the house), she told them, as *Josephus*, and the *Vulgate* understand the text, That they just drank a little water, and hastened forward. Upon which they continued their pursuit; but not being able to find them, after all the search, and inquiry they could make, they returned to *Jerusalem*. And as soon as they were returned, *Jonathan*, and *Abimaaz* came up, from their concealment; and made the best of their way to *David*; whom they informed of all that had passed in *Absalom's* council, and added *Hushai's* earnest advice, and intreaty, that he would immediately pass over the river, and place himself, and his people in safety from surprize, in case things should take another turn, and *Achitophel's* council prevail over *Hushai's*. *David* instantly obeyed the friendly monition given him, with such diligence, and dispatch, that before the next morning, he, and all his people were safe, on the other side of the *Jordan*: which, as it required a considerable number of boats, or floats of some kind,

kind, to convey them over a river not fordable, must, in all probability, have been attended with some circumstances of felicity, favoured by Providence. And we need not doubt, but he now took as much care, to retard the passage of his enemies, in case they pursued him, as he had before done, to dispatch his own.

I have often thought, that a history of *David's* piety, in all the various events of his life, could it be regularly pursued, and clearly connected, would, under the conduct of a masterly pen, make one of the most curious, and entertaining (as well as useful) relations, the world ever beheld.

We have already seen him sending back the ark of God, as from one unworthy the divine presence, and protection : we have seen him ascending *Mount Olivet*, in all the distress of humiliation, and penitence ; his head covered, and his feet bare, and weeping as he went. — We have seen him prostrate on the summit of it, pouring out his supplications, and proclaiming his confidence in God.

Let us now follow him to the wilderness, and there we shall see him again (upon finding that his *enemies took counsel against him, and laid wait for his soul*) renewing his supplications, in the most affecting, and pathetic strains, that ever were penned *. Although his enemies had said, *ver. 11. God hath forsaken him : pursue him, and take him ; for there is none to deliver him ;* yet, was his hope still strong, in that God, that he would *deliver him, out of the hand of the unrighteous, and cruel man.* God, who had protected him, in the vigour of youth, he prayed, and he confided, would not now fail him, in the infirmities of age. What tho' his own strength was decayed ? he would
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* Psalm lxxi. *In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust.—Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape.—Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous, and cruel man.—Cast me not off, in the time of old age : forsake me not, when my strength faileth.*

go against his enemies, in the strength of the Lord God †. *Now also, when I am old, and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power unto all them that are yet to come.*

It could neither be denied, nor dissembled, that he was now reduced to great distress; but, great as his distresses were, he had been redeemed from greater. His enemies looked upon him as a dead man; but they forgot, how easily the hand of God could raise him up again, as from the grave; and not only renew, but augment his grandeur. *Thou, which hast shewed me great, and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again; and shalt bring me up again, from the depths of the earth — Thou shalt increase my greatness — I will also praise thee upon the psaltery, &c. — For they are confounded, they are brought into shame, that seek my hurt.*

So he confided, and so it came to pass; and *Achitophel*, the enemy's arch-counsellor, was the first instance of God's vengeance, upon that rebel-race. For, finding his hellish, but salutary advice to *Ab-salom*, despised, and foreseeing from thence, that *David* must quickly prevail against his infatuated enemies, he immediately returned to his own city, put his household in order, and (in desperation) *banged himself*, (says the text,) and died.

When he had contrived, inspired, diffused, and propagated evil, through an innumerable multitude, and loaded his soul, with all the horrors of complicated guilt, that hell could devise; treachery, rebellion, incest, parricide! he hurried it to all the vengeance due to it, from eternal justice; to prevent all possibility of reparation, and repentance, he died in the act of self-murder. So perished the great *Machiavel* of that age; the very wisest of the very wise-men of this world! *whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame, and whose end is destruction.*

But,

† Ver. 46, 17, 18.

But, it is time to return to *David* —

David, and his son now set themselves to make the best preparations they could ; the one to carry on his unnatural rebellion, and the other to defeat it.

And here, perhaps, the reader may not think it amiss to leave them a-while, and employ a few moments in reflections, not foreign to the affair before us.

And first: It is remarkable, that this rebellion was, in all appearance, the real, although remote consequence of *David's* adultery. For *Bathsheba* was the daughter of *Eliam**, and we find *Eliam*, the son of *Achitophel*, among *David's* worthies†; consequently, this *Eliam* was, in all probability, the father of *Bathsheba*; and if so, then may we fairly conclude, that *Achitophel* engaged in this conspiracy, in revenge, for the dishonour done to his family, in the person of *Bathsheba*, which no subsequent marriage could repair, or efface: and, I think, we may plainly perceive, in the determined cruelty of *Achitophel's* advice, and resolution to destroy *David* with his own hands, all the malice, and rancour of a particular, and personal revenge. And if this be the true state of the case, which I am far from adventuring to pronounce, (for indeed there are strong probabilities on the other side) then was verified that fine observation, in *the Wisdom of Solomon*, (recounted among the appointments of Providence) That *wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished*.

In the next place, I cannot but reflect, with astonishment, upon the applause, which Mr. Bayle hath gained; and with horror, upon the evil errors he hath spread by his casuistry! and particularly in the article of *David*. He is very angry with *Hushai*, for deceiving *Absalom*; but much more with *David*, for advising him to it. A conduct, which he loads with all the guilt of seducing his friend, into a dam-

nable

* 2 Sam. xi. 3.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 34.

nable sin, which he should rather have lost his crown, than have suffered him to commit.

If Mr. *Bayle* had been acquainted with the first principles, and rudiments of the law of nature, he could not but know, that *Absalom*, a traitor, a murderer, a rebel, (and, as far as in him lay, a parricide) had (as such) forfeited all the rights of society: but more especially, as a rebel; for a rebel, who sets himself to overturn the established government, order, and peace of any community, does, by that hostile attempt, actually divest himself of all social rights, in that community. And, consequently, *Hushai* could no more be guilty of sin, in deceiving him, in order to defeat the purposes of his villainy, than he could be guilty of a sin, in deceiving a mad dog, and turning him away from murdering his best friends.

It is scarcely to be imagined, how any casuist could be so fillily scrupulous, as to make the least doubt, whether any man in his senses, had a right to deceive a mad-man, (whose only demerit is a disturbed brain) and delude him from his evil purposes: how much more then, a deliberate, determined traitor, who had forfeited all the rights of humanity, as well as society! a black parricide, mad with pride, ambition, and cruelty! the worst excesses, and outrages of a corrupt heart! To defeat the horrid purposes of this monster's villainy, to rob him of the glory of massacring the best friends of his family, of imbruing his hands in the blood of all his brethren, and crowning rebellion, and murder, with parricide! to take measures to restore this wretch, once more, to the mercy of a tender, forgiving, father; and, in consequence, to repentance, and a right sense of duty! *to save his soul alive!*—How crying a guilt was it in *David*, to form a design of effecting all this; and how damnable a sin in *Hushai*, to execute it!

C H A P. XII.

David goes to Mahanaim, and gathers an Army. Absalom passes the Jordan, and pitches in the Land of Gilead. David sends out his Forces against him, under the command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai.

WHEN *David* had passed the *Jordan*, he went directly to *Mahanaim*, lately the residence of *Isbosheth*, and antiently the resting-place of *Jacob*; where God had placed him, under the protection of two hosts of *Angels*. The king's distress there, at this time, naturally led him to reflect upon the distress of his great ancestor, in the same place: where being encompassed with a weak, and helpless family of wives, and children, as *David* now was, news was brought him, that his brother *Esau* was coming against him, with a strong band of men, and as he had too much reason to apprehend, with an hostile disposition to destroy him. Could any thing be more natural, than for *David* to cry out, upon that occasion, as he doth in the thirty-fourth *Psalms*, ver. 6, 7. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* That God, who delivered *Jacob*, from his brother, could, with equal ease, deliver *David*, from his cruel son. The meek, and humble *Jacob* trusted in God, and was delivered; and why might not *David* hope for a like deliverance, under the same spirit of humiliation, and trust in the divine protection? It is scarcely to be imagined, how *David* could avoid falling into this train of thinking, in this place, at this time; and if he did fall into it, it is less to be imagined, how he could refrain from expressing it; at least, so far, as to leave some traces, and memorials of it behind him! And such memorials, (beside that now cited) I apprehend, are plainly to be found in the twenty-second, and twenty-fifth

Psalms;

Psalms ; both of which may very naturally be presumed to have been written, on this occasion. Thus *Psalms* xxii. ver. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. *My God, look upon me: Why hast thou forsaken me? — And thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them, &c.* God had made good his promises to *Jacob* — his promises made to him, in this very place: *The worship of Israel still continued holy*: Why then should not *David* hope to have his promises made good to him also, although he was now, in all appearance, upon the very brink of ruin? So also, *Psal.* xxv. ver. 1, &c. *My God, I have put my trust in thee; let me not be confounded, neither let mine enemies triumph over me: for all they that hope in thee shall not be ashamed; but such as transgress without a cause, shall be put to confusion — Lead me forth in thy truth — Call to remembrance, O Lord, thy tender mercies, which have been ever of old —* He then proceeds to implore pardon for his sins, the true cause of all his calamities. And, rightly collecting, that he himself was *Jacob's* representative, and heir of the promises made to him, he concludes, with supplicating, as in his person, *Deliver Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.* Such sincere penitence, such steady faith, such persevering piety, could not fail to prevail in the end. His prayers were heard; and to shew they were, it pleased God to inspire (in this critical, and decisive juncture) the hearts of many faithful subjects, and brave soldiers, with signal zeal for his service; and they resorted to him from all quarters, with such expedition, and in such numbers, that, in a few days, he had a complete army, at his command, which he divided into four bodies: one he reserved within the city, and over the other three he placed three brave captains, *Joab*, *Abishai*, and *Ittai*, one at the head of each. Provisions also of all kinds were poured in upon him, from persons of the greatest distinction, throughout all the regions round about. Among whom *Shobi*, the son of *Na-*

basb, of *Rabbab*, of the children of *Ammon*, is placed first. And as the provisions sent were in great plenty, (with utensils of various kinds) sufficient for *David*, and all his forces, this shews the power, and wealth of those that supplied them, as well as their affection to *David*. And, therefore, the inference from hence is natural, that when *David* chastised the agents, and instruments of *Hanun's* tyranny, he left *Shobi* in the regency of the country, with such marks of kindness, and friendship to him, as now engaged *Shobi*, in his turn, to give the king all possible demonstrations of affection, and gratitude, in his distress. A season, in which, any other principles than gratitude, and affection, would have operated, in a very different manner. And some of the utensils sent, the beds particularly, shew a peculiar, and personal concern, for the ease, and conveniency both of *David*, and his family; and were, indeed, (in those circumstances) the proper presents of one prince to another, personally esteemed, and honoured.

The next man of consequence, who distinguished himself in his affection, and zeal for *David*, on this occasion, was *Masbir*, the son of *Ammiel*, of *Lodebar*, the friend, and protector of *Mephibosheth*; who, from that very character, must be presumed to have been, at first, in some degree, disaffected to *David*; but now, not only reconciled, but zealously attached to him; and, probably, in a great measure, from the king's most noble manner of treating *Mephibosheth*. The last of those, who had now distinguished their zeal for *David*, is *Barzillai*, the *Gileadite*: a man of a very uncommon character; very aged, very wealthy, and very generous! A man, who, with all the bodily infirmities of old age, was yet clear of all those which dishonour, and deform the mind, in that season; equally superior to timorous caution, sordid avarice, and unsuited luxury: as will be further seen, in the sequel of this history.

The circumstances now related, were all so many happy beginnings, and omens of *David's* future success; and pledges of that just, and humble confidence, which he had placed in the divine favour, and protection. Let us leave him to all the consolation of these happy hopes, and return to *Absalom*.

When *Absalom* had indulged his criminal commerce with his father's concubines, (as the occasion, and circumstances too strongly indicate) to satiety; a satiety, even in the lowest degree of guilt, confessedly dreadful; he proceeded to reward the merit, and hide the horrors of his incest, in the pomp, and splendor of a publick coronation; and was, accordingly, solemnly anointed*, and crowned. And it is probable, that by the time this affair was over, he found his forces strong enough to attempt upon his father. He gave the chief command of his army to *Amasa*, another of *David's* nephews, the son of his sister *Abigail*: and it is reasonable to believe, from the words of the text, that his forces were very numerous; for when the sacred historian informs us, that *Absalom* passed over *Jordan*, he adds, *be, and all the men of Israel with him; and they pitched in the land of Gilead.*

When *David* found himself sufficiently strong, to go against the enemy, he resolved not to wait their coming, but give the assault; and, accordingly, marched his forces out of the city, under the three captains before-mentioned, declaring, that he himself also would go forth with them, and share their fate; which his people earnestly dissuaded him from; insisting, that he should stay behind, and, if occasion were, succour them from the city: for that their defeat, if they should fly, was of little consequence, whilst he was safe, whose single life was worth ten thousand of theirs. The king yielded to their affectionate intreaties; and I am persuaded, he

K k 3

did

* 2 Sam. xix. 10.

did it with less reluctance, upon a reflection, that he must otherwise go against his own subjects; and draw his sword against a rebel son, whom he could not think of, but with too much tenderness, in spite of all his crimes. And as a proof of this, he, that moment, gave the kindest charge concerning him, to all his captains: *Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man——with Absalom.* He begs them to deal gently with that *young man*, as if all his faults were more those of his youth, than his nature. But at the same time, that his people could not but discern, in these words, the excess of his weakness, for that profligate son; they could not but observe also in them, a calm presage, and assurance of their success against their enemies.

A battle quickly ensued, and I think, *Josephus's* account of it, is the least rational, and satisfactory that can well be imagined. He tells us, that *Joab* put his army in battle-array, over-against the enemy, in a great plain, with a wood behind him; and that the enemy were routed, and driven with great slaughter, through the forests, and valleys.

Now, in the sacred writings, we hear but of one wood, in which, they tell us, the battle was fought; as also, that *David's* army marched out of the city, and gave the assault. This account is very short; but thus much, I think, we may fairly conclude from it, that *David* carefully concealed the number of his forces, from the enemy; in all probability, to make them imagine him much weaker, than, in truth, he was. And it is highly probable, that it was to this end also, that he divided his army into three bodies, under three several captains. Now, if we suppose two of these bodies carefully lodged, and concealed in the sides of the wood of *Ephraim*, (where the battle was fought) and the third led out from the centre of it, (by *Joab* for instance) against the enemy; and upon the assault, retiring, and, as it were, driven back again, by the enemy, into the heart

heart of the wood ; and that then, *David's* forces, who had lined the wood, started up from their cover, upon a signal given, and assaulted *Absalom's* army, in flank on either side ; nothing can be imagined, more likely to throw them into the utmost confusion, and consternation ; and, of consequence, to gain *David* a complete victory. And without some such supposition as this, it is scarcely to be imagined, how an universal battle should be fought in a wood ; and how a less army could there destroy a greater ; or how that greater could be driven through a wood, which, according to *Josephus's* account, lay at the back of their enemies. Nor, indeed, in my apprehension, is the text intelligible, but upon some supposition of this kind ; which tells us, literally, that *the people* (that is, *David's* forces) *went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim, where the people of Israel were slain, before the servants of David.* Which plainly shews, that *David's* forces fought not to any effect, till they retreated into the wood ; and there they exerted themselves, with full vigour, against their enemies ; which is unimaginable, upon any other supposition, than that they, there, had them to more advantage ; probably, from the ambushes there laid against them.

In this general rout, *Absalom* fled amongst the rest, and was met by some of the servants of *David* ; who, revereing the king's command, let him pass unhurt : yet he escaped not ; for whom they would not arrest, the divine vengeance did : for as he fled on his mule, *The mule*, (says the text,) *went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven, and the earth, and the mule that was under him went away.*

In this posture, one of *Joab's* soldiers saw him, and informed his general of what he saw, and was reproved by him, for not dispatching the traitor, when he had him in his power ; which if he had

done, he would have given him ten shekels of silver, and a military girdle. To which the soldier replied, That, although he should give him a thousand shekels of silver, he would not disobey the king's command, issued, in his own hearing, to all his captains : and that, if he had disobeyed it, he should have acted a lye against his own life ; for nothing was concealed from the king, and, perhaps, *Joab* himself would have been the first to inform him. At this, *Joab* turned from him in a chafe ; and taking three darts in his hand, *he thrust them, (says the text,) through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak ; and ten young men, that bare Joab's armour, compassed about, and smote Absalom, and slew him.*

This done, *Joab* sounded a retreat, and put an end to the carnage of the enemy. And, when the soldiers were all returned from the pursuit, they took down *Absalom* from the tree, threw him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a great heap of stones upon him. Stoning to death, was the legal punishment of rebellion against parents ; and, therefore, they, who could not chastise him living, for this sin, now branded him dead, as he deserved *. It seems, having no son to continue his name, he had erected a monument to it, hewn out of the living rock, which he meant to be of perpetual duration, and may, perhaps, be so, (for it is still extant, and no despicable remain of antient architecture) if it be not buried in the stones thrown at it, in detestation of his memory, by all that pass by it. For now this work of vanity, is become a memorial of reproach. Strange power of guilt, which can, in one moment, turn all the devices of vanity, all the memorials of excellence, all the securities of fame, into monuments of infamy !

Thus

* And this, I apprehend, gave rise to the custom amongst us, of throwing heaps of stones, upon the graves of malefactors, altho' it was of earlier use among the *Jews*, *Jos. vii. 26.*

Thus fell this cruel, this murderous, this incestuous parricide ! and with him twenty thousand of his rebel adherents ; some by the sword in battle, and in flight, (for they were scattered over the face of all the country) but more in the wood, being, probably, wedged to death between trees, trampled upon stumps, and tumbled into pit-falls, in the press, and hurry of their flight ; and some of them, perhaps, devoured by wild beasts, where they hoped to be concealed.

When the battle was over, *Abimaaz* begged to be made the messenger of this good success, to the king : but *Joab*, who loved him, and knew how disagreeable, the account of *Absalom's* fate would be to *David*, refused to let him be the bearer of such unwelcome news. And calling to one of his attendants, whose name was *Cushi*, bid him go, and tell the king what he had seen. *And Cushi*, says the text, *bowed himself — and ran*. However, *Abimaaz* revolving *Joab's* reason for refusing to send him on that errand, and recollecting, that he could distinguish between what was agreeable, and what was distasteful to the king, in the success of that day, begged to be permitted to run after *Cushi* ; and *Joab* gave way to his importunity : and he, taking the advantage of an easier road, out-ran *Cushi*.

One of *David's* watchmen espied them speeding forward, and immediately informed the king ; who, hearing of one man coming alone, concluded him a messenger sent by *Joab*, with some account of the battle : and the watchman then calling out, That he saw another man running alone, the king concluded, that he also was sent with further news ; and upon the watchman's telling him, That he took the foremost to be *Abimaaz*, the son of *Zadok*, the king said, *He is a good man, and bringeth good tidings*. And when *Abimaaz* came within hearing, he cried out, *All is well* : and coming up to the king, fell prostrate before him, and blessed God for the deliverance,

verance, wrought in his favour, against his rebel subjects. The king then eagerly inquiring, Whether *Absalom* were safe? *Abimaaz* answered, That when he came away, he saw a great tumult; but could not tell what it meant.

The king, doubtless, apprehended the worst; and *Abimaaz*'s dissimulation had this good effect, that it prepared him for it.

Cusbi came up soon after, and repeated the joyful tidings, that *Abimaaz* had brought. And being also asked, If *Absalom* were safe? he answered with a wish, That all the king's enemies might *be as that young man*. The king could not stand the account; but immediately ran up to his chamber, to give vent to his distress: yet could not refrain from tears, and lamentations, even till he got thither; but was heard crying out, as he went, *O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! — Would God, I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!*

The king's command to spare *Absalom*, was, indeed, an extraordinary instance of mercy (equalled only in him, who, dying, prayed for his murderers); yet it is to be accounted for, from his fatherly fondness, and the benignity of his nature. But there is something astonishing, in this excess of grief, for such a reprobate; and, I confess, it is, to me, utterly unaccountable, from any other principle, than the sad, and shocking reflection, of his having died, with all his sins upon his head; and gone down quick to perdition.

I can recollect but one man, in all the accounts of antiquity, whose character will bear to be compared with *Absalom*'s; and that is, *Cyrus* the younger.

Cyrus was allowed the completest, most accomplished man, among the *Persians*, as *Absalom*, among the *Israelites*. There is nothing particularly said of his beauty (except, that he had a great quantity of long hair); but, as he is allowed the most majestic man, among the *Persians*, after the elder *Cyrus*, who was remarkably beautiful; and, as personal advantages

tages always entered into the idea of a majestic man, in the earlier ages; it is probable, that *Cyrus* also excelled in these—They were both royally descended; both immoderately ambitious; both bent upon destroying their brothers, who stood in their way to the throne; and both laid trains to destroy them. *Cyrus* miscarried in his attempt; but *Absalom* succeeded in his. Both were pardoned these crimes, for which they deserved to die: and both no sooner pardoned, than they formed a design of rebellion against the persons who forgave them; which they carried on, by a long train of practised popularity, calumny, and dissimulation. And, to conclude, they both died in rebellion, and in battle; the one against his father, the other against his brother: and both died childless, at least, without heirs to continue their name. Here, indeed, they differed: *Artaxerxes* insulted the remains of his rebellious brother. *David* lamented the death of his rebellious son.

C H A P. XIII.

David, grieving to Excess, is reproved by Joab, and brought to appear in publick. Measures are concerted, with Zadok, and Abiathar, for his Restoration. The King returns to his Capital.

WHEN *David's* army perceived his affliction, they considered themselves, as a kind of criminals, who had contravened the king's command, and were, upon that score, in disgrace with him; and, for that reason, they stole back to the city in silence; as men, not less ashamed of the battle they had won, than if they had fled from their enemies: by which means, the victory of that day, was turned into mourning, unto all the people.

When *Joab* returned from the field, and saw the king, abandoned to grief, and lamenting his son, in a most distressful manner; the people also disconsolate, hanging down their heads, and hiding themselves;

selves; he broke in upon the king, without any previous form, or reserve; and giving a full loose, to the impetuosity of his nature, fiercely reproached him, with a most unkind, and unbecoming behaviour, to a brave army, who had just saved him, and his family, from destruction; and yet were treated as so many cowards, and traitors; and a rebellious, reprobate son, so far preferred to all their united merits, that he was well satisfied, that if all they had perished in their duty, and that single son survived, it had been matter of joy to their sovereign. He then added a furious threat, and confirmed it by a solemn oath, by the living God, that if he did not instantly quit his apartment, appear in public, and treat his people as they deserved, they would that moment desert him, as one man; which would be far worse than all the calamities that had hitherto befallen him.

The king, however offended, by this rough treatment, and offensive truth, nevertheless, thought fit to dissemble his resentment, for the present; and immediately left his chamber, and went to the gate, the seat of publick justice, where he gave audience to the people: who immediately resorted thither in crouds to him; and were received, and treated by him, as they deserved; or rather, as well as his present distress would allow.

David, now victorious, over a rebel army, totally ruined, and routed, had it fully in his power, to take ample revenge of all those, whose treachery, and infidelity (which had so lately brought him to the brink of ruin) well deserved to be severely chastised. And it is evident, that if he had had any thing revengeful, or sanguinary in his nature, he could now want no pretext, either of justice, or policy, to indulge it to the full: but he was governed by very different principles; and saw the whole affair of his son's rebellion, and his own conquest, in another light. He knew the first, to be the effect of his guilt;

guilt; and the last, the fruit of his penitence, and humiliation before God; and, therefore, made no other change in his conduct, than from prayer, and penitence, to gratitude, and thanksgiving, and a patient, humble expectation, of his providential disposal of the event. Nor did he fail of his reward: for now it seemed good to the great Governor of the world, who, at his pleasure, *stilleth the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people*, to turn the hearts of *David's* subjects, as it were, in one instant, in his favour; insomuch that they now returned to their duty, with as much eager zeal, as they had, but a few days before, rushed into rebellion against him. And now, their only contention was, which of their tribes should most signalize their loyalty, and affection, for their sovereign. They now recollected the many deliverances, from their enemies, wrought for them by his hand; and could not but find it an ill return, for these blessings, to drive him out of his capital. They reflected, that the man, in whose favour they rebelled, was dead; and what could they now do better, than return to their duty, and reinstate their lawful sovereign on his throne? The only question was, how they should go to work, and where they should begin. Things do not easily fall into their ancient, and true order, after so much tumult, and confusion, as was now spread through the land; and *David* rightly judged, that it required the skill, and address of some men of wisdom, and weight with the people, to set things right, and conduct them in their natural course: and accordingly, he chose *Zadok*, and *Abiathar*, the priests, to be his agents in the affair; and advised them to apply themselves, first, to the tribe of *Judah*; and to reprove their delay, and inactivity, in taking proper measures, for bringing the king back; especially, when they knew, that all the other tribes were intent upon his restoration; and had given him strong assurances, to that purpose. And to influence them
more

more effectually, the king added this kind message to them, from his own mouth ; *Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones, and my flesh : Wherefore then, are ye the last to bring back the king ?*—And forasmuch as *Joab's* credit with the army, had for a long time been insupportable to *David* ; had formerly protected him, under the guilt of *Abner's* murder, and lately, under an avowed contempt of his sovereign's commands ; *David* judged this a fit opportunity of humbling his insolence, and repressing his power, by placing *Amasa* at the head of his forces : and accordingly, he sent him a kind message, to remind him of his near relation to his prince, and to assure him of the supreme command in the army, if he returned to his duty. This kind treatment of that rebel captain of the hostile host, and all his rebel adherents, had all the effect that he could hope for ; it touched their hearts, and melted them into loyalty, and affection ; and they immediately deputed the heads of their tribe, to wait upon the king, and invite him to return : and he immediately complied with their request, and began his progress to the river *Jordan* : and had not gone far, before the principal persons of his whole tribe met him, in a body, to conduct him over the river. *Shimei* also, the *Benjamite*, who had so lately reviled, and cursed the king, now waited upon him, attended by a thousand men of his tribe ; and, falling down at *David's* feet, confessed his guilt, and his perverseness, and implored forgiveness ; adding, with a very refined address, *Thy servant doth know, that I have sinned ; therefore, behold, I am come the first, this day, of all the house of Joseph, to go down, to meet my lord, the king.*

He very well knew, that a *Benjamite*, of the family of *Saul*, came but ill recommended to *David*, under that character ; and, therefore, he would not denominate himself from *Benjamin*, but from *Joseph*, his beloved brother. *Abishai*, who had before so highly resented his vile treatment of *David*,
thought

thought this a fit season, for wreaking his revenge ; and accordingly, reminded the king of *Shimei's* insolence, in hopes of his permission to chastise it ; which *David* refused, with indignation, and a reproof, becoming a great king : *What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiab, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me ?* (Was this the duty of their relation, to act the part of his worst enemies ?) *Shall any man be put to death, this day, in Israel ? I know that I am, this day, king over Israel.* Should the day of his reconcilment to his people, be blemished with blood ? He knew himself a king, not of one party, but of his whole people ; and, therefore, wisely resolved, that his fatherly affection should extend to them all. He knew himself a sovereign, and he knew, that mercy, and forgiveness were the noblest privileges of sovereignty. And when he had signified this, he turned to *Shimei*, pronounced his pardon, and confirmed it with an oath, that he should not die.

With *Shimei*, went *Ziba* also, the slanderer of *Mephibosheth*, with his fifteen sons, and twenty servants, to meet, and to do obeisance to the king, and conduct him over the river : to which purpose, the people of *Judah* prepared a boat, which first carried over the king's household, and then returned to carry over the king : and with him, his aged, and faithful friend, *Barzillai*, the *Gileadite* ; who had so generously, and so amply, provided for his sustenance, while he lay at *Mabanaim*. The king, unwilling to be outdone in generosity, would fain have prevailed upon him, to go with him to *Jerusalem*, and allow him to take care of him there, for the rest of his life ; that he might have continual opportunities of expressing his gratitude, and repaying what he owed him : but *Barzillai*, in a spirit of true wisdom, and becoming moderation, declined this generous offer. The pleasures of a court had no charms for him, in that advanced age : he was then fourscore years old ;
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his senses, and appetites were long since palled, and both music, and banquets had lost all their relish. He, therefore, begged the king to give him leave to wait upon him over the river, and then return to his own city ; there to die in peace, *and be laid in the grave of his father, and his mother.* But, if his majesty pleased, he might take his son *Cbimbam* with him, and deal with him as he thought proper. The king readily consented, to take the young man with him, promised to provide for him, and assured *Barzillai*, he would do every thing else he desired. And when the old man had conducted *David*, as far as he proposed, the king took his last leave of him ; kissed, and blessed him, and suffered him to return to his own home ; but took *Cbimbam* with him to *Jerusalem* ; whither he was conducted by his own forces, and the chiefs of the tribe of *Judab* ; and was now restored to his capital, with as much pomp, magnificence, and general joy, as he had lately been driven from it, with grief, dejection, and distress.

C H A P. XIV.

A Contest arises between the Tribes, about restoring the King : A Rebellion ensues : Amasa is commanded by David to quell it, but murdered by Joab : Sheba, the Leader of the Rebellion, takes refuge in Abel Maacah, where he is besieged by Joab. A wise Matron intercedes for the city.

THE joy of *David's* restoration was not, however, without its alloy : it seems, the people of *Judab* had taken their resolution of restoring the king, without taking advice, or concerting any measures, with the other tribes, upon that head ; and, accordingly, having fixed upon *Gilgal*, on this side *Jordan*, for the place of their meeting, they assembled themselves there, on the day appointed ; passed the river, and waited in a body upon the king ; and conducted him back over the river, as far as *Gilgal*,
in

in conjunction with half the people of *Israel*; probably, made up of those *Israelites*, who first joined him at *Mahanaim*, and those, who were afterwards deputed, by the tribes, to invite him home.

At *Gilgal*, they were met by the other half of the *Israelites*, who also intended to have crossed the river, and paid their duty to the king; but finding, that the tribe of *Judah* were beforehand with them, they resented the slight put upon them; and being joined, and supported in their resentments, by the rest of their brethren, who had re-conducted the king, in conjunction with *Judah*, they all, with one voice, warmly expostulated with the king upon it; demanded, why their brethren, the men of *Judah*, had stolen him away, and brought the king, and his household over *Jordan*, without advice first had with them? To which the men of *Judah* answered, That, as the king was of their tribe, their brethren of *Israel* had no reason to resent their warmer zeal, in his favour; that, for the rest, they had acted from no selfish, or mercenary views, that they had received no gratuity from him, nor so much as eaten of his meat.. The *Israelites* replied, that they had ten parts in the king, and, consequently, more right to be consulted, upon a point of so much consequence.

This was a natural contest, between greater power, and nearer relation; both claim a preference, which both cannot have; and which those of nearer relation should have yielded, both in point of prudence, and affection for their friend, which the men of *Judah* did not. In all disputes, it is natural for the party injured, to be more angry; and, therefore, they who are in the wrong, often assume that character, by supplying from passion, whatever is wanting to them, in point of reason, and argument, as the tribe of *Judah* did now; for the text informs us, *that the words of the men of Judah, were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.* This naturally inflamed the contention, and it soon grew so hot, that *She-*

ba, the son of *Bichri*, a *Benjamite*, took the advantage of it, to kindle a new flame in the nation. He blew the trumpet, and cried out, *We have no part in David, neither have we any inheritance in the son of Jesse*—Every man to his tent, O *Israel*. Upon this, the men of *Israel* ran again into rebellion, forsook their king, and followed *Sheba*; but the tribe of *Judah* clave to him, and attended him, from *Jordan* to *Jerusalem*.

When he entered the city, poor *Mephibosheth* came to meet him, with all the ensigns of forlorn distress, both in his garb, and person; for he had utterly neglected both, from the day, the king was driven from his capital. Far from acting the part of a plotter, against his sovereign, his concern for him was manifested, by all the marks of a sincere, undissembled affliction; estranged not only from joy, but even from indulgence in the common conveniences of life: his beard was untrimmed, his cloaths unwashed, and his poor, infirm, feet undressed, that whole time. *David* called to him, and asked him, Why he had not attended him, at his departure from *Jerusalem*? To which that upright, open-hearted, son of *Jonathan* answered; *My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king, because thy servant is lame*—Here his grief (or rather, a righteous indignation, to find himself traduced, and suspected) choked his words, and broke the chain of his discourse. And it was with difficulty he seems to have added, — *and he hath slandered thy servant, unto my lord, the king. But my lord, the king, is as an angel of God; do, therefore, what is good in thine eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men, before my lord, the king; yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table: What right, therefore, have I yet to cry any more unto the king?*

And

And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, thou, and Ziba divide the land.

The reader will easily perceive, from this answer of *David*, that he saw *Mephibosheth's* innocence, (and found himself upbraided by it) and the error of his own former credulity; and, therefore, could not bear to hear of it: but he had now no time to discuss the matter more fully, and, therefore, all that he could do, for the present, was, to restore him to his estate, and leave both him, and his accuser, in their former condition, till he could inquire further. However *Ziba* might have been faulty towards *Mephibosheth*, he had been signally faithful, and useful to *David*; and to condemn him unheard, as he had *Mephibosheth*, were to run the risque of a second rash decision; a decision, that might be now as unseasonable, as rash, whilst another rebellion subsisted in his dominions.

The antient way of tenancy (nor is it yet quite disused) was that of occupying the land, and giving the proprietor a certain, annual portion of the fruits of it. When the tenant paid one half of the annual produce, he was called *Colonus partarius*; and such, in the judgment of the best critics †, was *Ziba* to *Mephibosheth*, as he had been before to *Saul*. So that *Ziba*, having half the fruits for his labour, had, in effect, half the land. Upon *Ziba's* misinformation, the whole was given to him; so that he was then both proprietor, and usufructuary. *David* now revokes that grant, and restores his first decree, by these words, *I have said, thou, and Ziba divide the land* *. To which *Mephibosheth* answered, in all the

L 1 2

generosity,

† See Trapp, Grotius, Selden.

* These words plainly refer to a former decree (*I have said*) now re-established. That could not be the decree in favour of *Ziba*, for there the whole was given to him; they must, therefore, refer to the first decree, whereby *Saul's* estate was divided between *Mephibosheth*, as proprietor, and *Ziba*, as usufructuary. And, therefore, the *Rabbins* talk idly, who imagine, that *David's* kingdom

generosity, and fidelity of his father's friendship; *Yea, let him take all, inasmuch as my lord, the king, is come again, in peace, unto his own house.* He had no solicitude, for the recovery of his estate, of which calumny had robbed him: his concern was, to recover his credit with the king. That once established, he was contented, and happy. The generous *Mephibosheth* said to himself, what *Seneca* said (and what it was much easier for a cold, uninterested, *Stoic* to say) to a friend in affliction; That he had no right to complain, as long as his prince was in safety. This upright, and generous conduct of *Mephibosheth* could not, I think, fail to restore him entirely to *David's* former friendship, and affection; and, if possible, to more credit, and greater confidence. And I have not the least doubt, but he continued in it, to the day of *David's* death. And, I think, I am warranted to say so, from the text, 2 *Sam.* ix. 13. for had this commerce ceased, for a series of years, I have some doubt, whether the sacred historian could be justified, in assuring us, as he there does, without any subsequent hint to the contrary, that *he did eat continually, at the king's table.*

That he was perfectly restored to *David's* friendship, is not, I flatter myself, irrational to conclude, from the thirty-seventh *Psalms*; which, I am persuaded, was written for *Mephibosheth's* consolation, under *Ziba's* calumny.

That most, if not all the *Psalms*, were written upon particular occasions, is not, I think, to be doubted; although the precepts, praises, exhortations, and monitions, contained in them, are, at the same time, calculated for general, and perpetual use.

That this *Psalms* was particularly written, for the consolation of some righteous man, oppressed by calumny; against whom some wicked wretch had laid

kingdom was divided under his grandson, on account of the unjust division of *Saul's* estate, between *Ziba*, and *Mephibosheth*.

laid schemes to destroy him, is clear from the whole tenour of it *. And who, and what is there in the whole history of *David*, to whom, and to which, it can refer, but to *Mephibosheth*, calumniated, and villainously wronged, by *Ziba*?

But, here it may be asked, Why *David*, if he believed *Mephibosheth* innocent, did not bring the matter to a fair trial? I answer, That a man of *Ziba*'s subtilty, who had laid so heavy an accusation, against *Mephibosheth*, had, undoubtedly, laid his trains, and schemes to make it good; and, therefore, *David*, in all probability, was afraid to bring the matter to a public trial, lest his friend's innocence should be oppressed, by false accusations; and, in the event, whether he were acquitted, or condemned, the bare bringing him to trial, could not fail to be matter of sufficient calumny against *David*; for though he should be acquitted, it might still have been plausibly urged, that *David* had done all that in him lay, to have him condemned: and, therefore, nothing could better become *David*, in this situation, than to wave the trial, and exhort *Mephibosheth*, to refer the matter, wholly to the arbitration of unerring wisdom, and justice: which would not fail finally to vindicate innocence, and avenge falsehood, and villainy. And this is, evidently, the main scope, and purpose of this *Psalms*. And that every part of it may very naturally relate to *Mephibosheth*, will appear, from two, or three easy, and natural suppositions (to which no thinking man can refuse a ready, and a rational assent); which, I hope, will clear this matter, to the reader's satisfaction.

Let us then suppose, that so wicked a man as *Ziba*, who had the intire management of his master's affairs, made no scruple to enrich himself by his spoils: and let us suppose, that, upon this dis-

L 1 3

covery

* *Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.—He shall make thy righteousness, as clear as the light, and thy just dealing, as the noon-day.*

covery of his villainy, *Mephibosheth*, who before confided in him, (as an old, faithful, servant to the family) and left every thing to his management, looked now more narrowly into his own affairs, and found himself, not only calumniated by his steward, but spoiled likewise, and impoverished; his steward rich, and flourishing in a numerous family; himself poor, and but with few children.

Now, nothing is more natural, than to suppose the generous, and upright heart of *Mephibosheth*, distressed, sunk, and uneasy, to the last degree, in this situation; and taking rash, and repining resolutions, to banish himself from a country, where he had found such treatment; and so put himself out of the power of calumny for the future. And what could be more natural, and more consoling, under these circumstances, than for *David* to beg of him to foregoe those rash resolutions; to admonish him, that if he bore his present, low estate, with patience, and resignation to the divine will, he should soon see it bettered; to mind him, that the prosperity of the wicked was short, and transient; that he himself had observed them flourishing, like a green bay-tree, with a thousand rich suckers rising from its roots; yet their duration was short, and their end destruction; that on the contrary, the righteous are the immediate care of Divine Providence, which would not fail to support, and deliver them, from their enemies; to assure him, at the same time, of his own intire satisfaction, in his innocence, and steady continuance of his friendship to him, in every exigency? And in what words, could all this be conveyed more strongly, than in the several following passages of this *Psalms*? *Fret not thyself because of the ungodly; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass. Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire. He shall make thy righteousness, as clear as the light, and thy just dealing, as the noon-day. A small thing that the righteous hath, is better than*

than great riches of the ungodly. Hope thou in the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall promote thee, that thou shalt possess the land: when the ungodly shall perish, thou shalt see it. The meek-spirited shall possess the earth, and shall be refreshed, in the multitude of peace. Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good — Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed — Leave off wrath, and let go displeasure: fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil — The Lord knoweth the days of the godly, and their inheritance shall endure for ever * — They shall not be confounded, in the perilous time, and in the days of dearth †, they shall have enough.

Suppose these *David's* consolations to *Mephibosheth*, under the circumstances now laid down, and suppose the last-cited verse, to be his own declaration, in favour of him (and imagination can apply them to none other, that we know of); what can they mean less, than an exhortation to faith, trust, and confidence in God, strengthened with the king's own declaration, that he was determined to support *Mephibosheth*, in every danger; and to share with him, to his last morsel of bread.

The sacred historian next informs us, That when *David* came to his house at *Jerusalem*, he took the ten women, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them: so they were shut up, to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

This done, his first care was to look after *Sheba*, and crush this rebellion in its infancy: to which purpose, finding this a fit occasion to rid himself of *Joab's* insupportable insolence, he commanded *Amasa* (whose credit with the soldiery could only counter-

L 1 4

balance

* Accordingly, we find the descendants of *Mephibosheth*, remarkably numerous, 1 *Chron.* viii.

† This passage seems to fix the æra of this *Psalms*, that it was written in the days of the publick famine.

balance that of *Joab*) to assemble an army, with all possible dispatch, and pursue him.

That *David* now deposed *Joab*, from the supreme command of the army, and put *Amasa*, according to promise, in his place, appears evidently, from this command, which he gave *Amasa*, upon his return to *Jerusalem*, to assemble the whole tribe of *Judah* there, within the space of three days, in order to crush the rebellion. *Amasa* went immediately about it; but made not such dispatch as *David* directed, but outstayed the time appointed. This gave the king great disquiet, and filled him with apprehensions, that this delay might suffer *Sheba's* rebellion, to grow up into something, worse than *Absalom's*. To prevent which, he ordered *Abishai*, to take his own life-guard, and such other forces, as were at hand, and instantly pursue that rebel. Accordingly, *Abishai* immediately assembled the *Cherethites*, and *Pelethites*, and another body of forces, called *Joab's* men, and all the mighty men of war, (whom I take to be *David's* worthies of their several orders) and went in pursuit of *Sheba*: and by the time he had reached the great stone at *Gibeon*, about two leagues northward from *Jerusalem*, *Amasa* met them, with such forces as he had gathered, and put himself at the head of the army. *Joab* seeing him there, was filled with rage, and indignation; yet dissembled it so well, that he went up, as others did, to pay his respects to him; and, as he walked up to him, his sword (whether by chance, or design) hung from his belt in such a manner, that it dropped out of the sheath: *Joab* took it up, and approaching *Amasa*, (who perceived not what was in his hand) in all the civility of a friendly salutation, took him by the beard, and, at the same time, stabbed him, under the fifth rib, with such a furious thrust, that his bowels gushed out, and he fell to the ground. This done, *Joab*, without taking the least notice of what had passed, put himself immediately in *Amasa's* place;

place ; and, with his brother *Abishai*, pursued after *Sheba* ; whilst one of his soldiers stood by *Amasa's* corps, and called out to the forces, as they came up, That all those that favoured *Joab*, and were for *David*, should follow *Joab*.

The men, as they came up, seeing *Amasa* wallowing in his blood, were struck with horror at the sight, and stood still, gazing at it ; which he, who was directed to attend it, observing, removed the corpse, from the high road, into an adjacent field ; and casting a cloth over it, hid the sad spectacle, from the eyes of the soldiers. Which done, the people without any further delay, followed *Joab*, in pursuit of *Sheba* ; who had passed through all the tribes, with all the dispatch he could, exciting them to rebellion, where-ever he went ; but, at length, finding himself hotly pursued, he took shelter in *Abel-maacah*, a city between *Libanus*, and *Antilibanus*, north of *Damascus*. There all the *Berites* (probably, the inhabitants of *Beeroth*, who were *Benjamites*) joined, and supported him. *Joab* immediately laid siege to the city ; and, from the accounts we have of his digging a trench around it, and battering the walls, critics have, I think, fairly concluded, that the science of besieging cities, with lines of circumvallation, and contravallation, (as they call them) and battering-engines, was much older than any account, left us of this practice, in the history of the heathen world ; although *Herodotus*, lib. i. gives *Harpagus*, *Cyrus's* general, the credit of having invented the lines now mentioned, and taken the city of *Phocæa*, in *Ionia*, (the first city so taken) by that invention ; whereas the sacred writer speaks of one of those lines, on occasion of the siege of *Abel*, as of a thing familiar, and well known to his readers.

As *Joab* pressed the siege, with all earnestness, and dispatch, a wise woman, from within, called out, over the walls, and desired to speak with him, in all the modesty, and decency of language, then in use.

And

And prefacing what she had to say, with a short account of the reputation of wisdom, in which that city anciently stood, she covertly (as the text is generally understood) expostulated with him, upon the iniquity of going about to destroy an ancient, and venerable city of his nation, without first proposing terms of submission to it; and offering peace, upon acceptance of those terms, as the law of God expressly directed to be done, even to an hostile, and heathen city (*Deut. xx.*). She urges, that her city was *faithful*, and *peaceable in Israel*: Upon what pretence then, could he engage in destroying a city of that character? Was not this to destroy a mother city in *Israel*, and to swallow up the inheritance of the LORD? Her speech seems marked with all the characters of wisdom; close, and clear, and cogent; singularly emphatical, and moving; and such as well supported the reputation of her city.

It is scarcely to be supposed, that she undertook this parley, otherwise than in concert, with the rulers of the city. And if so, nothing surely could be managed with more address, than their chusing out a wife, and venerable matron, to plead their cause. In the first place, her sex, and character intitled her to attention, and respect; which, possibly, could not so well be secured, to any rebel of the other sex, with a man of *Joab's* rough, and haughty spirit. In the next place, they knew, that antient, and honourable cities were wont to be considered, under the characters of matrons, revered for virtue, and a numerous, well educated, offspring (and this way of speaking is familiar to all languages): Who then, could be so proper a representative of a city, in distress, as a complaining matron *? This our venerable, female advocate well understood; and, therefore, addresses all she had to say, in the person, and style

* Both cities, and countries, in distress, are frequently represented, under the character of complaining matrons; both in the writings, and medals of the antients.

style of her city ; *I, peaceable, and faithful, in Israel* — *Thou seekest to destroy a city, and a mother in Israel* — *Why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?* Upon which *Joab*, struck with the horror of such imputed cruelty, eagerly cries out—*Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up, or destroy* — He then added, that all he proposed was, to chastise a rebel, *Sheba*, the son of *Bichri*, who had taken sanctuary, in that city ; and that, if he were delivered up, the siege should immediately cease, and the city be left unmolested. Upon the receipt of this answer, the matron went, *in her wisdom*, (says the text) and laid the matter so effectually before her people, that, to clear themselves, from the imputation of rebellion, they did more even than *Joab* desired : they immediately ordered *Sheba's* head to be cut off, and thrown over the wall, to *Joab* ; who, upon seeing it, commanded a retreat to be sounded, that instant, quitted the city, dismissed his people, to their several homes, and returned to *Jerusalem*, to the king ; and returned, with the weight of so much merit, and popularity, as effectually covered his murder of *Amasa*, from all attempts of inquiry, or chastisement. *The crime* (as *Florus* expresses it) *was within the glory* : and not only so, but reinstated him, likewise, in the supreme command over the army.

Thus did it seem good to the Divine Wisdom, to permit *Joab's* unruly ambition, and impetuous cruelty, at one time, separate from all sense of duty, and, at another, joined to it, to punish the guilt of four notorious rebels *, in succession, with dreadful deaths ! two of them, indeed, treacherous, and sudden ; but all, in the retributions of Providence, judicial, and just.

Here ended *Absalom's* rebellion, and *Sheba's*, which rose from the ruins of it : but the contest between the tribes, which occasioned it, was not, we may well

* *Abner, Absalom, Amasa, and Sheba.*

well imagine, yet intirely laid : and, therefore, *David*, as I apprehend, wrote, and published the hundred and thirty-third *Psalms*, about this time, to compose it. It is one of the shortest of all his works, and consists but of four verses * : yet, short as it is, it contains an exhortation to unity, beginning in the prince, and diffused through the people, illustrated by two images, the most apt, and beautiful that ever were imagined. Kingdoms are considered as bodies politick, of which the king is the head, and the people, in their several ranks, and orders, the parts, and members. A spirit of union, beginning upon the prince, whose person is sacred, is like oil poured upon the head of *Aaron*, which naturally descends, and spreads itself, over all the parts of the body, and diffuses beauty, and fragrance, over the whole, reaching even to the skirts of the garment. Oil is, without question, the finest emblem of union, that ever was conceived ! It is a substance, consisting of very small parts, which yet, by their mutual adhesion, constitute one uniform, well united, and useful body. The sacred oil carries the idea, and the advantage, of union, yet further ; which being extracted from various spices, yet made up one, well-cohering, and more valuable compound. The next image carries the exhortation to union, and the advantages of it, yet higher.

Hermon was the general name of one mountain, comprehending many lesser, and lower hills, under the surround of a greater. Union, in any nation, is the gift of God ; and, therefore, unity among brethren, beginning from the king, is like the dew of heaven,

* Behold, how good, and joyful a thing it is, for brethren to dwell together, in unity.

2. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard, even unto *Aaron's* beard, and went down to the skirts of his cloathing.

3. Like as the dew of *Hermon*, which fell upon the hill of *Sion*.

4. For there the Lord promised his blessing, and life for evermore.

heaven, which, falling first upon the higher summit of *Hermon*, (refreshing, and enriching, wherever it falls) naturally descends to *Sion*, a lower ; and thence, even to the humble valleys.

Sion was the centre of union, to all the tribes ; there God himself had promised his people rest, and peace, from their enemies ; which, however, were of little value, without union, and harmony among themselves.

C H A P. XV.

Judea is visited with a Famine. The Cause of the Divine Wrath. The Means, and Method appointed to appease it. Mr. Chubb's Charge against David, upon this Head, considered, and refused.

ABOUT this time, there arose a famine in *Judea*, which continued three years. It is very possible, that for the first year, *David* might have ascribed this calamity, to *Absalom's* rebellion ; which, by diverting the people, from their wonted industry, and cutting off many of their labouring hands, left the country, for some time, uncultivated : the natural consequence of which was, a scarcity of corn. But, as this rebellion was of short continuance, and the famine long outlasted all the natural effects of it, *David* could not long hesitate, to ascribe it to some other cause. But however, as he had, in the true spirit of a provident ruler, erected granaries, and store-houses, for provisions of all kinds, in all parts of his dominions* ; and, by that means, made ample provision, for the sustenance of his people, in any exigence that should arise ; he was the better enabled to bear this misfortune, with equanimity, and intire resignation to the All-ruling Will. And accordingly, whatever remedies, or reliefs he might have sought

* This appears clearly from 1 *Chron.* xxvii. 25. *And over the store-houses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, was Jehonathan, &c.*

sought for, from natural causes, and private, and publick prayers to Almighty God, he made no application for the extraordinary aid, and interposition of Providence, till the third year : but, in the third year, being well convinced, that the visitation was judicial; he applied himself to the sacred oracle of God, to learn the cause of this extraordinary, and continued calamity ; and was answered, That it was for Saul, and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

The history of the *Gibeonites* is well known : they were a remnant of the *Amorites*, (that abandoned race, whom God, for their insufferable abominations, had devoted to destruction) who, though they obtained a league, for their lives, and properties, from the children of *Israel*, by fraud ; yet, forasmuch as *Joshua*, and the elders had confirmed it by oath, they thought themselves bound to keep it ; only tying them down, to the servitude of supplying the tabernacle, with wood, and water, for the publick sacrifices, and service of those who attended upon them.

This unhappy people, notwithstanding it is agreed, on all hands, (from the tradition of the *Jews*) that they had renounced their idolatry, and performed the other conditions of their covenant, *Saul* sought all occasions to destroy : and did so, to such a degree of guilt, as drew down the divine judgment, upon the land.

When *David* had learned the true cause of the publick calamity, under which the land laboured, and had been directed (as *Josephus* informs us) to refer himself to the *Gibeonites*, for the measures, that should be taken, to expiate the guilt ; he immediately sent for that afflicted people, and asked them—*What shall I do for you ? And wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord ?*

To

To this they answered, that they desired no reparation of private damages, or revenge of injuries; all they required was, that a publick sacrifice should be made to justice, and the divine vengeance inflicted upon the land. *David* then, pursuant to the instructions, which he had received from God, desired to be informed by them, what they would have done, upon that occasion. To which they replied, *The man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed, from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord, in Gibeab of Saul, whom the Lord did choose. And the king said, I will give them. But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David, and Jonathan, the son of Saul. But the king took the two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiab, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni, and Mephibosheth, and the five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up * for Adriel, the son of Barzillai, the Meholatbite. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the Lord: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death, in the days of harvest.* There is no question, but they chose to have this execution, in *Gibeab of Saul*, for the reasons assigned by *Dr. Patrick*; to make the punishment the more remarkable, and shameful; this being the city wherein he lived, both before, and after he was king. But why these seven were mark'd out, as victims to the divine vengeance, is not so easy to say.

The text immediately adds, that this was *the beginning of the barley harvest*, viz. about *March*; so that the

* In the original it is bore: Thus *Agamemnon*, and *Menelaus*, though the children of *Plisthenes*, are (as *Eustathius* observes) called the sons of *Atræus*, who educated them; and *Ruth's* child is called a son born to *Naomi*, who nursed it (*Ruth* iv.): as if education, and nurture gave a right of parentage, in the estimation of the antients.

the sacrifice was made in the beginning of the third year. And the sacred historian informs us, that they continued hanging in that condition, (a public monument of terror to guilt, in the highest rank of men) *until water dropped upon them from heaven*: that is, until God gave manifest tokens of his reconciliation, by sending gracious showers to refresh the land: which, in the opinion of the *Hebrew* doctors, was not until the ensuing *October*: an opinion, well warranted by the text; which gives us to understand, that the bodies hung there, till the flesh fell from the bones †.

Commentators have justly observed from hence, that the hanging of these carcases, for so long a time, in the open air, could not be in consequence of any command of *David*; because it was an open violation of the law of God, *Deut. xxi. 22, 23.* which commanded, that the carcases of all those who were hanged, should not remain, even one night, upon the tree; but should, by all means, be buried, on the very day of execution. And the reason of the law; *viz. Lest the land be defiled*, held strong in the present case; inasmuch as the stench of so many carcases, for so long a time, in a malignant drought, and in the very hottest season of the year, might have added a pestilence to the famine: a danger, which it is impossible to imagine, *David* would deliberately devise, both against his people, and himself; and, consequently, demonstrates itself imposed upon him, by a superior power: confuting all the little cavils of mean men, against the conduct of *David*, upon this occasion: cavils, which are further confuted, by the account left us of *Rizpah's* singular affection, for these unhappy victims. She spread a tent upon the rock, on which they were executed, and kept a continual watch over their remains, night, and day; *and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on*

them

† 2 Sam. xxi. 13. *And they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.*

them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. Which when *David* heard, did he resent this conduct, which might have been a natural means of propagating a pestilence? Quite otherwise, it sufficiently appears, from his subsequent behaviour, that he rather emulated it; for he immediately went to *Jabesh Gilead*, and caused the bones of *Saul*, and *Jonathan*, to be removed from thence, and deposited, together with the bones of *Saul's* seven sons, now executed, in the sepulchre of *Kish*; himself attending them in person to the grave: as if *Rizpah's* kindness, to the remains of these unhappy victims, reproached his own neglect of doing due honour to those of so excellent a man, and so valuable a friend, as *Jonathan*.

The sacred historian adds — *And they performed all that the king commanded, and after that God was intreated for the land.* This plainly implies, that God gave no signs of being appeased, until after the performance of these funeral rites: which grounds a rational belief, that these offices of humanity, to the remains of the dead, are highly acceptable in the sight of God. And, perhaps, this very instance gave rise to the religion of this duty, in the heathen world.

Another inference is also obvious, from this account of God's being intreated for the land, after the discharge of those offices to the dead; viz. that publick devotions had been appointed before this, to appease the wrath of God, but proved ineffectual. The same thing is also evident from *Psalms* lxxv. agreed on all hands to have been composed, upon the ceasing of this calamity, ver. 1. *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed.*

A complete comment upon this sacred hymn, is not the work either of my province, or genius; and, therefore, I shall only observe, that the five last verses of it are the most rapturous, truly poetic, and nat-

tural painting of joy, that imagination can form, or comprehend.

The reader of taste will see this, in the simplest translation, ver. 9, &c. *Thou hast visited the earth, thou madest it to covet, and hast enriched it. The river of God is full of water. Thou shalt provide them corn, because thou hast prepared for it. Saturate* the furrows thereof, make them sink with showers: melt it—bless its springing buds—Thou hast crowned the year with thy goodness, and thy orbs shall drop down fatness; the pastures of the wilderness shall drop: the hills shall exult, and be girded with gladness—The fields have clothed themselves with cattle; the valleys have covered themselves with corn. They shall shout, yea, they shall sing.*

The reader will easily observe, that when the divine poet had seen the showers falling from heaven, and the *Jordan* overflowing his banks, all the consequent blessings were that moment present, to his quick poetick sight, and he paints them accordingly.

But we must quit this pleasing scene, and divert to something, as thoroughly distasteful, and disagreeable, as this is delightful: for I am now called upon, in justice to my subject, to inform the reader, that *David's* character, not only as a hero, but as a man of honour, and common honesty, is violently assaulted by one || *Thomas Chubb* †, who imputes the death of *Saul's* descendants, procured by the *Gibeonites*, not to any command of God, but to a plausible pretext of *David's*, pretending such command, to get rid of *Saul's* posterity, his rivals in empire: blasting *David*, at once, with the complicated imputation of the basest of lyars, hypocrites, and

* In Hebrew, *Make them drunk.*

|| See *Chubb's* pamphlet, on occasion of the opposition to Dr. *Rundle*, &c. p. 27, &c.

† Of whom I know no more, than that the business of his whole life seems to be, to invalidate, to the utmost of his power, the credibility of the sacred historians.

and murderers! Murderer of that family, which he had twice § solemnly sworn not to destroy; and this, at the very time, when the hand of God was heavy upon him, and his people! Murderer of that family, whose murderers he detested, and destroyed!

The sum of Mr. *Chubb's* reasoning upon the point, stands thus?

It is inconsistent with equity, and with God's own declarations, to punish one man, and much more a whole nation, for the faults of another; therefore, the history, which tells us, that God punished the children of *Israel* with famine, for the crime of *Saul*, in slaying the *Gibeonites*, is incredible: consequently, God's supposed answer, upon *David's* inquiry concerning the cause of the famine, was a forgery of *David's*.

In answer to this charge, I own it inconsistent with equity, and with the divine declarations, to punish one man for the crimes of another, in which he had no share — But was this the case of the *Israelites*, in the point before us? A candid, and good man would, methinks, be apt to doubt, and to hope, (and, it may be, Mr. *Chubb* did so) that it was not. The reader will judge for himself.

It is evident from the ixth chapter of the book of *Joshua*, that when *Joshua*, and the princes made a league with the *Gibeonites*, the people were greatly offended with them*. Whatever the pretences of this resentment might be, (nor did they want such as were plausible enough) the true reason seems sufficiently apparent; they were, by this league, deprived of the lands, and spoils of the *Gibeonites*.

M m 2

Did

§ 1 Sam. xx. 15.—xxiv. 21, 22. Swear now, therefore, unto me, by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me; and that thou wilt not destroy my name, out of my father's house.

And David swore unto Saul.

* Whoever will take the trouble to read this chapter, will plainly see, that the people would have had this league broken; which *Joshua*, and the princes opposed; pleading the inviolable obligation of the solemn oath, with which it was ratified.

Did these reasons cease in the days of *Saul*? Or rather did they not still subsist; and with more force, in proportion, as the people of *Israel*, and their wants, increased, in a narrow land? But, however this may be, why did *Saul* slay them now? The text plainly saith, that he did it, *in his zeal for the children of Israel, and Judah* (2 Sam. xxi. 2.). But the question still returns, How could the destroying these poor people manifest *his zeal for Israel, and Judah*? There is, to me, but one imaginable way, how this could be done. The *Gibeonites* had one city in the tribe of *Judah*, and three in *Benjamin*: and when they were destroyed out of these cities, who could pretend any right to them, but *Israel*, (that is, *Benjamin*) and *Judah*? So that *Saul* destroyed the *Gibeonites*, as the kindest, and most obliging thing, he could do for his people. And are we to believe, that they deemed that destruction a kindness to them, if they were no way benefited by it? Or are we to doubt, whether they themselves were the instruments of this destruction? Was this kindness done them, against their will? Or is there the least colour to believe, that they, in any degree, remonstrated against, or opposed this proceeding of their prince? as they had a right, nay, were nearly interested, and obliged to do, as a nation bound to make good the publick faith, they had given, and sworn to preserve; the violation of which, might justly draw a curse on them, and their land. And were the people innocent, either in this agency, or this omission? And if they suffered a famine, for the slaughter of the *Gibeonites*, did they suffer only, for the sin of *Saul*? Or rather, were they not consenting, aiding, and abetting, were they not sharers in his guilt? And is it unequitable, that they should also be sufferers? Or did they suffer beyond their demerit? *The divine punishment of perjury is destruction*, say the Twelve Tables*.

I am

* *Perjurii pœna divina exitium.*

I am in good hopes, that this candid author will, at least, reverence *their* decision ; and if he doth, I have some hopes, that we shall no more see the oracles of God, and his holy prophet reproached, and their veracity exploded, upon such rash, and unsearching surmises.

But however some great philosophers may allow themselves, in this triumph of their reason, and insult upon sacred truths ; good Christians will (I trust in God) continue nevertheless, in the humility of believing the truth of the sacred history ; will continue to believe the truly pious, and noble spirit of *David*, incapable of so atheistical, so murderous, so perjurous an hypocrisy : and I will yet hope, bad as the world is, that there are few spirits in it, so unbridled, and uncheck'd, in their censures, and suspicions, as to believe this great man capable of so black, so deliberate, so *Machiavilian* a villainy.

Besides, if he were that hellish villain, which this calm, and uncredulous philosopher takes him to be, why did he stop here ? why slay only seven of *Saul's* descendants ? why did he not cut them all off, from the face of the earth ? But above all, why did he cut off only collateral branches, and spare all those in the direct line of succession to the throne ? Why spared he the heir apparent to the crown, even when an accusation of high treason was laid against him ? Why spared he *Mephibosheth*, the son of *Jonathan*, and *Micah* his son, and his four sons (whom, in all probability, he lived to see) ? And why did he not prevent, perhaps, the most numerous descent, from any one person of the age he lived in ? (See 1 *Chron.* viii. 33. and following verses.)

But why should *Saul's* descendants suffer, for the sins of their fathers ? Is not this contrary to God's own declaration, *Ezek.* xviii. 20. *The Soul that sinneth, it shall die, the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, &c.*

But what, if *Saul's* family were sharers in his guilt, instruments of his cruelty, and receivers of his robberies? Should they then go unpunished?

Commentators, who have considered this passage, are mightily puzzled to know, why *Saul's* posterity were not rather punished, for his cruelty to the priests of God, than to the *Gibeonites*. But the answer to this is obvious; his family refused to be the instruments of his cruelty, in that massacre. This appears from 1 *Sam.* xxii. 17, 18. compared with *ver.* 7. of the same chapter. From the 17th and 18th *ver.* we learn, that *Saul's* servants refused to obey him, in the slaughter of the priests; and that *Doeg*, the *Edomite*, (chief of his herd-men) was the executioner. And from the 7th verse we learn, that these servants were of his own stock *, and such of it too, as he seemed most solicitous to prefer, and to provide for. *Then Saul said unto his servants, that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites: Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields, and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds? That is, Will he do for you as I have, and mean to do?*

His captains, we here see, were of his own kindred; and whom can we presume him so solicitous to exalt, to these stations, as his own sons, and grandsons? or whom else can we presume him so solicitous to supply, with fields, and vineyards?

Now I desire to know, how *Saul* could do this? He could not so much as purchase the possessions of one tribe, and transfer them to another, much less could he transfer their lands by force. We know of no territories wrested from his enemies, to accommodate his *Benjamites*. It is true, he smote the *Amalekites*, from *Havilah* to *Skur*, (1 *Sam.* xv. 7.) but
it

* In the *English* translation, they are called *Benjamites*, but in the *Hebrew*, they are called the sons of *Jemini*, who seems from 1 *Sam.* ix. 1. to be a more immediate founder of *Saul's* family, so that these servants were not only of his tribe, but of his kindred,

it is no-where said, that he took possession of their country, or that he took so much as one city from them; or if he did, the country, or city, so taken, must immediately become the property of that tribe, in whose lot that part of the *Amalekite* land lay; which most certainly was not *Benjamin*. But although it should be allowed, that he took some cities from the *Amalekites*, there is good reason to believe, that he lost more to the *Philistines* *, and, possibly, some of them belonging to *Benjamin*.

Upon the whole, it is evident to a demonstration, that *Saul* had no possible way of enriching his *Benjamites*, with fields, and vineyards, but by destroying, and dispossessing the *Gibeonites*. When, therefore, we are told from the mouth of God, that the plague, sent upon the people, was for *Saul*, and his bloody house, because he slew the *Gibeonites* †, is it not evident, that it was sent for their guilt, as well as his? And can we imagine, that this guilt of theirs could be any thing less, than that of being the instruments of his executions? It is plain, that they were his captains of hundreds, and captains of thousands; and it is as plain, that as such, they must be the instruments of his cruelty: and if they were not, why are they called *bloody*? They refused, indeed, to slaughter the priests, at his command; bad as the *Benjamites* were, they had not yet forgotten to fear God, and to reverence his priests. But is there the least colour of reason to believe, that they were so scrupulous, with regard to the *Gibeonites*? And if they were not, is there less equity in God's destroying their sons, for the sins of their fathers, which they

M m 4

adopted,

* 1 Sam. xxxi. 7. *And when the men of Israel, that were on the other side of the valley, and they, that were on the other side Jordan, saw, that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul, and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came, and dwelt in them.*

† The words which we render, *he slew*, might as properly be rendered, *they slew*.

adopted, and shared in, than there was in his destroying *Jeboram*, the son of *Abab*, for that vineyard, which the father had cruelly, and unjustly acquired, and the son as unjustly detained? And, indeed, there seems to be no imaginable reason, why *Saul*, when he had destroyed the priests of *Nob*, should, after that, destroy the inhabitants of that whole city, but because they were most, if not all of them, *Gibeonites*, (who were obliged to attend there upon the altar) whose spoils might become a prey.

To this may be added, that three of the *Gibeonite* cities lay (as I now observed) within the lot of *Benjamin* *; and how could *Saul* so conveniently enrich his tribe, and his family, as by dividing these possessions amongst them?

And now, as I humbly apprehend, was fulfilled, more clearly, more naturally, and more circumstantially, than in any, or all other events, throughout the whole history of the scriptures, that prophecy of their father *Jacob* concerning them, *Gen. xlix. 27. Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf: in the morning, he shall devour the prey, and in the evening, he shall divide the spoil.* And, indeed, what can be a stronger, or a clearer emblem of a wolf, tearing, and ravaging an innocent flock of sheep, than *Saul* destroying a quiet, submitting, unoffending race of *Gibeonites*; and, when he had done so, dividing their spoils, among his partners in the prey? It must be owned, that the pretext for doing so, was not unplaussible, inasmuch as these men were spared, contrary to the express command of God. And for whom, do we think, *Saul* was more solicitous to provide, out of these spoils, than his own sons, by *Rizpah*, his concubine, and

* See *Josh. ix. 17.* compared with *chap. xviii. ver. 25, 26. chap. ix. ver. 17. And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day: now their cities were Gibcon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. Chap. xviii. ver. 25. Gibcon, and Ramah, and Beeroth. Ver. 26. And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah.*

and the children of his daughter ? And this reasoning is strengthened by reflecting, that *Nob* was in the tribe of *Benjamin* ; and when both the priests, and *Gibeonites* were destroyed, out of this city, who then could take possession of it, but *Benjamin* ?

When the *Gibeonites* were taken into league, they were left in possession of their cities : this sufficiently appears, from their sending to *Josbua*, (*Josb. x.*) to deliver them, from the *Amorite* kings, who besieged their capital, and had combined to destroy them : and he did as they desired. Their complaint against *Saul* now is, that *he devised to destroy them, from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel* (*2 Sam. xxi. 5.*). Can this complaint mean less, than that *Saul* had taken measures, to strip them of all their possessions ? That he stripp'd them of one city, hath fully been shewn, in the preceding part of this history : * and their complaint now is, that he devised to strip them of all : and why he did so is, I believe, no longer a question.

How just are the judgments of God ! If *Saul* destroyed an innocent people, to make provision for the offspring of a concubine, and the offspring of a daughter, which she bare, in consequence of his own faith to *David* violated †, could any thing be more equal, than that this very issue, chief agents of his cruelty, should now be called for, to make atonement for that guilt !

Let others find their account, and sound their fame, in reviling the divine dispensations, recorded in the scriptures ; be it ever my glory to reverence them ! to reverence them, in the silence of my closet, and to publish that reverence to the world, (when

* Book II. Chap. 4.

† *Merab*, the mother of five of these victims, was promised to *David*, upon a solemn, and public compact ; the conditions of which were fully performed on his side, to the great glory, and security of the state ; and then, in violation of that solemn, and repeated engagement, given to another, *1 Sam. ch. xvii. ch. xviii.*

(when the revilings of others provoke me to it) without any view, to the wages either of vanity, or wealth!

Give me leave to add, that when I see some determined philosophers, of the last, and present age, pursuing the reputation of *David*, with as murderous an intent, as *Saul* did his life, I cannot help imagining, that I hear this hero crying out to them, as he did to *Saul*, (1 Sam. xxiv. 12, 13.) *The Lord judge between me, and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee* — *As saith the proverb of the antients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.*

C H A P. XVI.

David enters into new Wars with Philistia. A Conjecture concerning the Cause of them. The first, and last Edition of the Eighteenth Psalm (published upon this Occasion) briefly compared. A Digression, upon the Usefulness of Music, to form the Manners. David's last prophetic Words. A short Conjecture concerning his Worthies.

THE history of the famine, under the reign of *David*, is succeeded, by a very short account of a war, with the *Philistines*; or rather of four successive wars: which seem to have lasted a considerable time, inasmuch as they were not ended, till after four pitched battles; each of which concluded in *David's* favour. Nor are any other particulars related of them; but that a man of gigantic stature, and strength, fell on the side of the *Philistines*, in each of them; the last of whom had six fingers, on each hand, and six toes, on each foot*: and that in the

* Instances of gigantic men are familiar enough, in the collections of the commentators, on this, and other passages of the same nature: and Dr. *Patrick* quotes *Tavernier's* relation of the grand signior's seraglio, page 95. wherein he tells us, That the eldest son of the emperor of *Java*, who reigned in the year 1648, when he was in that island, had six fingers, on each hand, and as many toes, on each foot, all of equal length.

the first of these battles, *David* was in danger of being slain by *Ishbi-benob*, the son of a giant, (whether of *Goliath*, or some other, is not known) had he not been timely succoured, by *Abishai*, the son of *Zeruiah*, who smote, and slew him. The account left us of this matter by *Josephus*, is to this purpose: That *David*, having put the enemy to flight, and being foremost, and carried too far, in the ardour of the pursuit, after some time, grew weary, and faint, with the fatigue. Which *Ishbi-benob* perceiving, and being armed with a huge spear, (as *Josephus* relates) and girded with a new sword, (as the text is understood) found that a fit occasion to assault the king; and had succeeded in his purpose, had not *Abishai* come seasonably to *David's* aid, and destroyed his adversary.

The apprehension of the king's danger struck his people, with deep concern, and consternation; and they immediately bound themselves, by a solemn oath, never more to suffer him to hazard his person in battle; adding a reason, which sufficiently indicates their high opinion, and esteem of him; *That thou quench not the light * of Israel*, lest they should be deprived of a prince, who was, at once, their guide, and their glory?

The cause, or occasion of these wars is no-where mentioned, in the sacred history; but there is a passage, 2 *Sam.* xv. 18, 19, &c. on which to ground a rational conjecture, concerning the origin of them: *And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men, which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king. Then said the king to Ittai, the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile — whereas thou camest but yesterday, &c. And Ittai, the Gittite, passed over, and all his men.* From whence it appears, that *Ittai*, an exile

* In Hebrew, lamp.

exile from *Gath*, arrived at *Jerusalem*, with all his men, the very eve of *David's* flight, before his son *Absalom*. From whence I conjecture, that the *Philistines*, hearing of *Absalom's* rebellion, took that opportunity to shake off the *Israelite* yoke; and to that purpose, drove out all the friends, and favourers of *David's* government over them; and among the rest, *Ittai*, and his followers; who arrived very providentially at *Jerusalem*, to support *David*, in the extremity of his distress. And, as this revolt of *Philistia* was succeeded by a long famine in *David's* dominions, we could not reasonably expect to hear of any measures taken, by that prince, to chastise that revolt, till after the ceasing of this calamity; and then we immediately hear of the wars now recounted.

When these wars were happily ended, and *David* was in perfect peace, both at home, and abroad, and in a fair prospect of continuing so, for the rest of his life, he then revised, and published the last edition of the eighteenth *Psalms*; which contains a summary of God's signal mercies, and deliverances, wrought for him; with such an overflowing of gratitude, for the divine goodness to him, as infinitely surpasses all other compositions, of all other men, upon this head. And what is very singular, and, I hope, not unworthy the reader's notice, he hath found the secret of most effectually perpetuating his own praise, by perpetuating that of his Maker: whilst he labours to make the praises of God glorious, he makes his own eminent, above all other mortals! A single instance will evince this. We never should have known, that *David* was the swiftest, and the strongest of all mankind, if his own thanksgivings had not told us so; if he had not blessed God, for giving him the swiftness of the hart, and the strength to break a bow of steel.

The critical reader will, I hope, not deem it beneath his curiosity, to see a few passages in this *Psalms*, published in *David's* youth, compared with the

the corrections of his more advanced years: the first, as they are found, in the book of *Psalms*; and the last, as they are published, in the twenty-second chapter of the second book of *Samuel*.

PSALMS.

VER. 1. *I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength.*
2. *The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust, my Buckler, and the Horn of my salvation; my high Tower.* 5. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of the ungodly men made me afraid.*

SAMUEL.

VER. 2. *The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer.* 3. *The God of my rock, in him will I trust; he is my Shield, and the Horn of my salvation, my high Tower, and my Refuge, my Saviour*. Thou savest me from violence.* 5. *When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of the ungodly men made me afraid.*

Every eye will discern to what infinite advantage this expression, *The sorrows of death*, is changed into, *The waves of death*. Nothing can be a finer emblem of an host of men, in their several ranks, than the waves of the sea, succeeding one another, in their natural order, And when we consider them, pressing forward, to the destruction of their adversaries, they may very properly be termed, *waves of death*.

PSALMS.

VER. 7. *Then the earth shook, and trembled, the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth.*

SAMUEL.

VER. 8. *Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations of heaven moved, and shook, because he was wroth.*

The

* As his deliverances were now multiplied, his gratitude seems, as it were, exaggerated, and makes new efforts to exert itself, when every idea, that would express it, seems exhausted.

The hills, shaking from the foundation at the wrath of God, is a noble idea : but the foundations of heaven, shaking at it, is a much nobler ! The thought too is strictly just ; for as the eye of the spectator is tossed to-and-fro, in an earthquake, the heavens must also appear to him to be agitated, in the same manner.

Although *David's* main purpose, in publishing these divine hymns, setting them to suited music, and singing them, in the public worship of God, was, to publish to the whole world, his endless gratitude, for the various, and wonderful mercies of God, bestowed upon him ; yet had he a further, and, if possible, a nobler purpose, in this conduct ; I mean, to disperse true religion, throughout every part of his dominions ; to inspire the hearts of his people, with a true, and lively sense of gratitude to God, their Benefactor, Protector, and Saviour, as well as his. *David* well knew, that true gratitude to God, is the surest source of true religion, and every duty enjoined by it. And when it is poured out for publick blessings, in which all partake, naturally mixes with every social affection, and blends them, as it were, into its own being ; and, by this means, becomes the very best bond of society. And, therefore, *David*, by perpetually pouring out the praises of God, in the most exalted, and heavenly compositions, and taking all occasions, to recount his endless mercies, and deliverances, wrought for his people, from the beginning, took the most effectual means, to fill their hearts, with gratitude, to their great Benefactor ; and, in consequence of that, to render them religiously observant of his laws ; to render them humane, friendly, and affectionate to one another, and conscientiously faithful, and dutiful to their sovereign.

The wisest, and most eminent of the antients, have left many encomiums, both upon the separate, and joint power of music, and poetry, towards soft-
ening,

ening, civilizing, and mending the manners of mankind; and the candid reader will, I am sure, pardon, if not thank me, for transcribing a passage to this purpose, from Mr. *Rollin*, one of the most polite, and truly valuable authors of this, or any age; the greatest lover of truth, and of mankind! *Vol. IV. of his Antient History*, p. 323, 324. *Music was cultivated with no less application, and success. The antients ascribed wonderful effects to it. They believed it very proper to calm the passions, soften the manners, and even humanize people, naturally savage, and barbarous. Polybius, a grave, and serious historian, and who is certainly worthy of belief, attributes the extreme difference between two people of Arcadia, the one infinitely beloved, and esteemed, for the elegance of their manners, their benevolent inclinations, humanity to strangers, and piety to the gods; the other, on the contrary, generally reproached, and hated, for their malignity, brutality, and irreligion; Polybius, I say, ascribes this difference to the study of musick, (I mean, says he, the true, and noble musick) cultivated with care, by the one, and absolutely neglected, by the other people.*

If such have been the effects of the sole, and separate power of noble music, what might not be hoped from it, when it is built upon, and supported by the noblest, the sublimest, the most heavenly strains of divine poetry, by which the world was ever delighted, informed, or amended! And such, beyond all controversy, or pretence of a rational doubt, are the sacred hymns, and psalms of *David*.

Pindar places this elogium, in the front of *Hiero's* character: That he took a noble delight, in the most exquisite strokes, and performances of poetry, and music. Could he have added to this, that he had a mastery over all mortals, in the composition of both, and crowned all, by the application of both to their noblest ends, and uses; the inspiring of true piety, and virtue, into the hearts of men, and celebrating the praises of God; recounting the
works,

works, and wonders of his providence, and infinite mercies to mankind ; how nobly had his character been completed ! how had it been, at once, exalted, and unrivalled ! The thinking reader will easily satisfy himself, that this glory, which *Pindar* could not confer upon *Hiero*, *David* hath, most unselfishly, and without the least taint, or view of vanity, secured to himself.

After *David's* last revisal, and edition of the eighteenth *Psalms*, now recounted, the sacred historian gives us to understand, that the last words which he spake, and committed to writing, as a prophet, are those which immediately follow this *Psalms*, in the second book of *Samuel*, chap. xxiii. And, indeed, it is of vast importance to the faithful, that they are committed to writing ; because he there expressly declares, *That the Spirit of God spake by him.*

The last words of great men, solemnly delivered, and upon points of great importance, have always been thought worthy of peculiar regard ; and have accordingly been carefully recorded : and, therefore, these of so great a prince, and prophet, as *David*, will not, I presume, be deemed unworthy the regard of the most incurious reader ; especially, as they will not take up much more than one minute of his time.

Now these be the last words of David : David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man, who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said ; The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake unto me, He, that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God : and he shall be, as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds ; as the tender grass, springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God ; yet be bath made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered

ordered in all things, and sure : for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

But the sons of Belial shall be all of them, as thorns, thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man that shall touch them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear, and they shall be utterly burnt with fire in the same place.

How glorious a conclusion of so noble an office is this ! to recollect God's signal mercies, and blessings, bestowed upon him ! His exaltation to royalty, from a low estate ! and his gifts of prophecy, poetry, and harmony ! His special command to him, as a king, and his eternal covenant with him, and his seed ! The continuance of his temporal kingdom, but with no increase of grandeur, in his posterity ! Their sure salvation, and protection, whilst they continued in the covenant, made with their father ! and the final reprobation, and destruction of the wicked ! and, above all, that blessed, and permanent assurance to the faithful, *That the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue !* Thus sealing the truth, and certainty of his divine inspiration, and, in consequence of that, the sacred authority of his writings, to endless generations.

Then follows the noble catalogue of *David's* worthies ; the noblest, and most truly renowned of all antiquity ; inasmuch as there is reason to believe, that any act of notorious guilt excluded from it ; for why, otherwise, so great a captain, and so brave a man, as *Joab*, should be left out of that list, when his two brothers, and even his armour-bearer, are included in it, I own, I cannot comprehend. And this conjecture is, I think, strengthened, by observing several names, in the list of these worthies, *2 Sam. xxiii.* left out in the subsequent list, *1 Chron. xi.* and a good many other names added, in this later list. From whence, I conclude, that some of the worthies in the first list, had their names

raised out, on account of some subsequent demerit, after the authors of the second book of *Samuel* were dead.

C H A P. XVII.

David's Numbering of the People: and the Plague which ensued.

THE people of *Israel* were scarcely recovered, from the calamity of that famine, which infested them, for three years, when they were visited, by another chastisement, apparently, more fatal, although of a very short continuance: a pestilence of three days; occasioned by the king's numbering of the people.

The most rational account of the matter is this: God had given them a command, by *Moses*, *Exod.* xxx. that, when they took the sum of the people, after their number, every man so numbered, from twenty years old, and upwards, should pay half a shekel to the sanctuary, as a ransom, for his soul, to God; under the penalty of a plague, to ensue the neglect of such payment: and accordingly, that payment was made, when they were numbered, *Exod.* xxxviii. 24. * And, surely, a most rational, and religious capitation this was, indicating, that their lives were the forfeit of their sins, to God: who, in mercy, accepted a small ransom for them; but an equal one for the lives of the highest, and the lowest

* If it be objected, that there are two other numberings mentioned, in the Bible, *Numb.* i. and *Numb.* xxvi. without any mention of any payment, to the sanctuary; I answer, That there is, indeed, no express mention made of any such payment, but I think it sufficiently implied, in both places; for *Numb.* i. 54. it is said, *And the children of Israel did according to all, that the Lord commanded Moses.* And in *Numb.* xxvi. 4. they are commanded to take the sum of the people, *as the Lord commanded Moses, and the children of Israel, which went forth, out of the land of Egypt.* And we know, that the payment of the half-shekel made a part of that command.

lowest amongst them, inasmuch as they were all of equal value, in his sight, with whom *there is no acceptance of persons.*

David, now (probably, from an impulse of vanity) desirous to know the strength of his kingdom, which he rightly judged to consist, more in the numbers of valiant men, than in the extent of empire, ordered the sum of the people to be taken, *from twenty years old, and upward*; without ordering the *Mosaic* ransom to be paid: for which reason a plague immediately ensued, which destroyed seventy thousand of them, within the time determined by the prophet. And, indeed, as the people were now more signally blessed by God than at any time, the neglect of paying this tribute, to their great Sovereign, under whose protection they were so wonderfully raised to wealth, and dominion, over their enemies, became more odiously infamous, and ungrateful. And it is to me unaccountably astonishing, how *David* could be brought to suffer this numbering, without taking care, at the same time, that the *Mosaic* ransom should be paid: but, in truth, he did more; he not only suffered, but enjoined, and urged it. And, to increase our wonder, *David* enjoined, and *Joab* remonstrated against it; remonstrated against it, not only with fine address, but with a spirit of true religion. His address is seen 2 Sam. xxiv. 3. for when *David* gave him his command, to go through all the tribes of Israel, and number the people——*Joab* said unto the king, *Now the Lord, thy God, add unto the people (how many soever they be) an hundred-fold, and that the eyes of my lord, the king, may see it: but why doth my lord, the king, delight in this thing?* And the religion of this conduct is seen from what is added, 1 Chron. xxi. 3. *Why doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?* But *David* was so bent upon the purpose, that nothing could dissuade him from it. And *Joab*, and the captains of the host, were immediately dispatched to execute it;

and returned not to *Jerusalem*, 'till the end of nine months, and twenty days; and even then returned, without accomplishing their purpose; for *Levi*, and *Benjamin* were not taken into the computation: For (says the text) *the king's word was abominable unto Joab*. Besides, as God had promised to multiply them, as the stars of heaven, and the sands of the sea, they thought it impious, so much as to attempt an exact computation of all orders, and ages, amongst them.

There are two returns left us of this numbering; (one 2 *Sam.* xxiv. and the other 1 *Chron.* xxi.) which differ considerably, from one another; especially, in relation to the men of *Israel*; which in the first, are returned but eight hundred thousand, but in the last, eleven hundred thousand. But I think a careful attendance to both the texts, and to the nature of the thing, will easily reconcile them. The matter appears to me thus: *Joab*, who resolved, from the beginning, not to number the whole of the people, but who, at the same time, wished to shew his own tribe, in the best light, and make their number as considerable as he could, numbered every man amongst them, from twenty years old and upwards, and so returned them to be five hundred thousand: but in *Israel*, he only made a return of such men, as were exercised, and proved in arms; and, therefore, the number of persons above twenty years old, is less in his return (2 *Sam.* xxiv.).

The reader will best judge, whether the letter of the texts doth not justify this conjecture: that of 2 *Sam.* xxiv. stands thus: *And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men, that drew the sword — and the men of Judah* (not the men of tried valour only, but the whole) *were five hundred thousand men*. Whereas, the account, we have of this matter in 1 *Chron.* xxi. stands thus: *And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand, and an hundred thousand men, that drew sword: and Judah four hundred threescore*
and

and ten thousand men that drew sword. In a word, in 2 Sam. xxiv. 9. the whole of *Judah* is returned, and only the men of proved valour in *Israel*. In 1 Chron. xxi. 5. the whole of *Israel* is expressly returned; but the particle *all* is not expressly prefixed to those of *Judah*; and, therefore, possibly, the men of tried valour in that tribe, are only included in that return: and if so, the returns must of necessity be very different. Indeed, it seems to me, as if all the sacred writers were upon their guard, against giving an exact return.

How unstable are all human purposes, and pursuits! *David*, whose heart was so lately set upon numbering the people, sees his guilt, and repents his purpose, the moment it was finished: that heart, which was so lately swell'd with vanity *, now shrinks, into contrition, and penitence.

It is somewhere said † of *Epaminondas*, that, the next day after the battle of *Leuctra*, he was seen remarkably sad, and dejected; and being asked the reason, answered, I yesterday suffered myself to be too much elated with vanity, and I am mortifying for it to-day. This seems to have been pretty much the case of *David*; whose vain heart now recoils, with dreadful pangs, upon his breast. And *David's* heart smote him, (says the text) after that he had numbered the people: and *David* said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly, in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

In this situation of mind, *Gad*, *David's* seer, found him, the next morning ‡, when he came to denounce

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* And, perhaps, this is the reason, why this action is imputed, to the instigation of *Satan*, the father of pride.

† To the best of my remembrance, in some of *Plutarch's* moral works.

‡ I must here observe, an egregious error, in our *English* translation: which gives us to apprehend, that *David's* penitence was,

the divine vengeance, upon his guilt : and to shew him, and the world, that the vengeance he came now to denounce, could be no casual calamity, nor the effect of any natural cause, he gave him his choice of three evils ; one of which must immediately be inflicted upon him : *Shall seven years of famine come unto thee, in thy land ? Or wilt thou flee three months, before thine enemies, while they pursue thee ? Or that there be three days pestilence, in thy land ? Now advise, and see, what answer I shall return to Him, that sent me.* To these dreadful, and distracting alternatives, David made this truly heroic, and religious reply : *And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait : let us fall now, into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great) and let me not fall, into the hand of man.* Had he chosen either war, or famine, his wealth, and his power had easily secured himself, and family, from any imminent danger of either : but in this consisted his heroism, that he chose that evil, which he himself risked, in common with his meanest subject.

The event was immediately answerable to the choice ; a plague instantly ensued, and continued to the time appointed ; which destroyed, in that very short space, seventy thousand men, from *Dan* to *Beerseba* : a calamity, which hath no parallel, in the whole compass of history.

David, deeply afflicted, and penitent, under this heavy chastisement, assembled the elders of *Israel* ; and all of them, cloathed in sack-cloth, humbled themselves, in a most solemn, and publick manner, before *God* ; imploring his mercy, and deprecating his vengeance. And whilst they were in this condition, *David*, lifting up his eyes to *God*, saw the angel of the Lord, standing, between the earth, and the
heaven ;

was the effect of *Gad's* threat : For, (says the text) when *David* was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet *Gad*, *David's* seer, saying, Go, and say unto *David*, &c. Whereas, the word which is translated *For*, should be translated *And* ; and it is not a causal, but a connective particle.

heaven; having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. Upon the sight of which, David, and all his attending elders, fell upon their faces, to the earth; and David cried out to God, *Is it not I, that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is, that have sinned, and done evil indeed. But for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord, my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.*

This supplication, and humiliation of David, and the elders, softened the divine wrath, and arrested the vengeance. *And the Lord said to the angel, that destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand.* And the place, where the avenging angel was staid, was over the threshing-floor of *Araunab*, the *Jebusite*.

Then the angel of the Lord commanded *Gad*, instantly to order David to go, and set up an altar to God, in the threshing-floor of *Araunab*, the *Jebusite*. David immediately obeyed, and treated with *Araunab*, for the threshing-floor; signifying to him, at the same time, the reason why he desired to purchase it. The truth of which, *Araunab* himself must easily be satisfied of, inasmuch as he also, with his four sons, had seen the destroying angel, and hid themselves, in terror of the sight. And, therefore, David had no sooner made the proposal, but the generous *Araunab* replied, with a ready offer of every thing he wanted; land, oxen for sacrifice, and threshing instruments for fuel, and the wheat for the meat-offering, without any price, or purchase. But this, David absolutely refused; declaring, that he would buy every thing, at the full price; and that he would not sacrifice to God, of that which cost him nothing: and accordingly, he bought the place, for six hundred shekels of gold; and the oxen, for fifty shekels of silver*. *And David built there an altar*

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* Much difficulty hath been raised, upon the articles of this sale, in a case, to me, sufficiently plain. The authors of 2 Sam.

unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, and called upon the Lord, and he answered him from heaven, by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

However criminal this numbering was in *David*, yet there are three points of importance clear from it.

The first is, the signal completion of God's promise to *Abraham*, of multiplying his seed, as the sands of the sea; inasmuch as the multitudes of men, comprehended within the narrow limits of *Judea*, even at this time, appears, from this numeration, to be great, beyond all comparison, although, confessedly, less considerable, than under some succeeding reigns.

The second is, that it appears, from the accounts left us of this matter, that all the cities of the *Canaanite* coast, and particularly *Zidon*, and the strong hold of *Tyre*, were under the dominion of *David*. But this, I apprehend, could only be the antient *Tyre*, or *Palætyrus*; inasmuch as *Hiram*, who lived in friendship both with *David*, and *Solomon*, was king of the other *Tyre*: which, from a letter of his to *Solomon*, quoted by *Josephus*, appears to have been situate in an island (*Antiq.* l. viii. c. 2.). But this, however, no way infers, the king of that *Tyre* not to have been tributary, both to *David*, and *Solomon*; as I apprehend he was, from his calling both *David*, and *Solomon*, his lord, and himself,

xxiv. tell us, that *David* bought the threshing-floor, but do not say for what; and then immediately add, *and the oxen, for fifty shekels of silver*—Now, it is but supposing such a stop, placed after the word *Floor*, as shews it to be a sentence, distinct from what follows, or supposing the following clause to be included, in a parenthesis (a construction which must be supposed, in all other writings, in a thousand instances); and the matter is clear of all difficulty. And that one, or both of these must be the case, is sufficiently evident to me, from 1 *Chron.* xxi. 25. where the price paid for the place, is expressly set down, to be six hundred shekels of gold, without mentioning any price, paid for the oxen.

himself, and people, *Solomon's* servants, 2 *Chron.* ii. 14, 15. Or if he were not, *David's* dominion over *Zidon* alone, will go a great way, towards accounting for those immense treasures, which he amassed for building the temple; inasmuch as *Zidon* is allowed to have been, from the remotest antiquity, one of the greatest marts of the world, which engrossed a great share of its wealth; and into which, and into *Tyre*, the veins of all its richest mines, then in their vigour, were naturally drained. And that *Zidon* was early renowned, for wealth, and magnificence, sufficiently appears, from its being styled, even as early as the days of *Joshua*, *Zidon the great*, *Josh.* xi. 8.

The third is, that *David* was not the cruel conqueror, which some men so eagerly infer him, from some parts of his history, ill considered, and, of consequence, little understood; inasmuch as we learn, from this transaction, that in the height of his resentment against the *Jebusites*, he spared *Araunab*, a king; in all probability, prince, and proprietor of the place; and suffered him to live in peace, and plenty.

If it be asked, why the people were punished, for this guilt of their prince, I answer, (besides the common observation, *Quicquid delirant reges, &c.*) in the sentiments of Mr. *Whiston's* comment, on this part of *Josephus's* history: That neither *David's*, nor the *Sanbedrim's* neglect of exacting this tribute, could excuse the people from paying it, when an express law of God enjoined it.

To speak freely, (if I may be allowed a wild conjecture) upon the point, I can conceive but one reason, why *David* now declined to enjoin the payment of this tribute: he was the great patron of religion, and protector of the church of God; and, if such a spirit then reigned in his nation, as now reigneth in ours (which I am far from pronouncing) such a sum of money, as this tax would have brought

brought into the sanctuary, could not fail to have raised an high out-cry of bigotry, (and the power of priestcraft) against him : and so he ran the hazard of letting the people be plagued, rather than exact a tribute, by which the priesthood must be enriched.

I shall only add, that the ninety-first *Psal'm* seems evidently to have been written by *David*, in commemoration of his deliverance, from this public calamity. That signal protection of Divine Providence, which he had now experienced, naturally prompted him to break out, into those expressions of hope, and trust in God, of which it is hard to say, whether the piety, or the poetry be more exalted : *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Surely, he shall deliver thee, from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.*

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night ; nor for the arrow that flieth by day.

Nor for the pestilence, that walketh in darkness ; nor for the destruction, that wasteth at noon-day.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right-hand ; but it shall not come nigh thee.

C H A P. XVIII.

David's Preparations to build the Temple : his private Exhortations to Solomon, and the Princes, to carry on the Work.

WHEN *David* saw, that his sacrifice was miraculously accepted, of Almighty God, by the descent of fire, from heaven, which consumed it, upon the altar, he immediately concluded, that this was the place which God had chosen, to establish his worship there ; and, therefore, he continued to offer up sacrifices, upon this altar : and accordingly told his people, that *this was the house of the*

the Lord God, and this the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel.

It is true, the tabernacle of the LORD, which *Moses* made, in the wilderness, and the altar for the burnt-offering, were, at that season, in the high place of *Gibeon*; and thither he should ordinarily have resorted, to sacrifice his burnt-offerings: but inasmuch as the angel of the LORD, had expressly commanded him, to erect an altar, in the threshing-floor of *Araunah*, and on that very spot, over which, the avenging angel was arrested, and God appeased, he naturally concluded, that this was the appointed place of atonement, so solemnly set apart for sacrifice: and, therefore, he feared to resort to *Gibeon* any more, for any purpose of religion *. And there is no doubt, but he was confirmed in his reasoning, upon this point, by reflecting, that this was the place, appointed by God himself, for the sacrificing of *Isaac*; and where the faith of his father *Abraham*, was so amazingly tried, so gloriously accepted, and so nobly rewarded.

All these concurring circumstances, and considerations, sufficiently pointed out this, as the place of that temple, which was to be the glory of the whole earth. And accordingly *David* set himself, from that moment, to prepare materials of all sorts for it, with all imaginable application, and zeal; as, indeed, he had done, for many years before.

And, indeed, there is no doubt, but it was at this time, that God inspired him, with the plan of the whole work; with all its parts, dimensions, and utensils: all which he himself expressly assures us §, *the Lord made him understand, in writing, by his hand upon him.*

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§ But *David* could not go before it (that is, the altar at *Gibeon*); for he was afraid, because of the sword of the angel of the Lord, 1 Chron. xxi. 30.

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 19.

That the architecture of this temple was of divine original, I, for my part, am fully satisfied, from this passage ; and I am confirmed in this persuasion, by finding from *Vilalpandus*, that the *Roman*, at least, the *Greek* architecture, is derived from this, as from its fountain: and, in my humble opinion, even an infidel may easily believe these to be of divine original ; inasmuch as they are (at least, the latter is) found perfect, in the earliest models. Nor hath the utmost reach of human wisdom, invention, and industry, been ever able (although often endeavouring it) to improve, or alter it, but to disadvantage, throughout the course of so many ages.

That *David* understood what he was about, is evident, from the nature of the thing ; for if he had not been complete master of the whole design, he could not have directed the hewing of the stones, nor adjusted the exact weight of all the utensils, as he certainly did, with great care, 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 12, &c.

In the first of these works, he employed all the *strangers*, that is, proselytes *of the land* ; who, probably, were more skilled in works of that nature : or, possibly, he chose not to take his own people, from the culture of the ground, and the several pursuits of rural industry.

He prepared iron, and brass, in abundance, and without weight, for the joinings (says the text) ; probably, both of the stones, and timber, which was all cedar ; and supplied him, in vast plenty, by the *Zidonians*, and *Tyrians*. He considered, that the work was to be great, and magnificent, beyond any thing, yet known to the world ; and, therefore, the preparations were to be proportionable. This the sacred historian fully informs us of, in 1 *Chron.* xxii. 5. *And David said, Solomon my son is young, and tender ; and the house that is to be builded to the Lord, must be exceeding magnifical, of fame, and of glory, throughout all countries : I will, therefore, now make preparations*

preparations for it. So David prepared abundantly, before his death: taking care, at the same time, to inform his son Solomon fully, of his whole purpose; and exhorting him, who was appointed by God to execute it, to pursue, and accomplish it, with diligence, and vigour; adding, that he himself once had it fully in his intentions, *to build a house, unto the Name of the Lord, his God*; but was expressly forbidden to pursue his purpose, because he had *been a man of war, and had shed much blood, upon the earth*; but that God had assured him, at the same time, that he would give him a son, who should be a man of peace, and his name *Solomon*; and that he should build him an house. And, upon this ground, he exhorts him to go on with the work: *Now, my son, the Lord be with thee, and prosper thee; and build the house of the Lord, thy God, as he hath said of thee.* He then adds a most earnest exhortation to him, to serve, and to fear God, as he hoped for his blessing upon his house, and nation; and concludes, with an earnest supplication to God, to inspire his heart, with wisdom, and a steady sense of duty to him, and to his people.

This done, David next proceeds to tell his son, what preparations he himself had made for the work: *Now, behold, in my trouble, I have prepared for the house of the Lord, an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass, and iron, without weight (for it is in abundance); timber also, and stone, have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto. Moreover, there are workmen with thee in abundance; hewers, and workers of stone, and timber, and all manner of cunning men, for every manner of work. Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise, therefore, and be doing; and the Lord be with thee.*

David's next care was, to engage all the great men of the realm, to be aiding, and assisting, to his son, in the carrying on of this great work. And, to this purpose,

purpose, he laid his particular commands, (as I apprehend) singly, and apart *, upon each of them. And after this, convening them in one body, he publicly exhorted them all, to the same purpose, in an oration, which (to me) is by far the noblest of the kind, extant in the world. But before I proceed to consider that performance, I must beg the reader's attention, to some points of great importance, antecedent to it.

C H A P. XIX.

A Dissertation upon the immense Treasures, left by David, for building the Temple.

THERE is no one point, relating to the sacred writings, in which I find learned men, and critics of all kinds, so greatly, and distantly divided, as this of the treasures, left by *David*, for building the temple; some thinking them incredibly immense, and others doubling them; some suspecting some numeral errors, in the text, and others sinking the talent, almost to nothing, in order to guard, against the supposition of any such errors; whilst others seem to value themselves, upon having discovered new veins of wealth, from whence much greater treasures might have been derived.

In the midst of this uncertainty, there are some points, I think, clear, and incontestable.

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* *Is not the Lord, your God, with you? and hath he not given you rest, on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand, and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before his people. Now set your heart, and your soul, to seek the Lord your God: arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house, that is to be built to the Name of the Lord.*

This, I apprehend, is recorded by the sacred writer, as the substance of *David's* private exhortations to each of the princes, upon this head.

The first is, that there is not the least ground to believe, that the *Hebrews* ever varied their weights, and measures, at least, before the captivity. And, therefore, *David's* talent was the same with that of *Moses*.

The next plain point is, that the *Hebrew* talent was of a considerable weight.

What *Moses's* talent was, is known to a demonstration, from the account left us of the first capitation, in the wilderness, *Exod.* xxviii. 25, 26. in which six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men, being taxed at half a shekel a head, raised a sum of an hundred talents of silver, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels. From whence it follows, that one talent contained three thousand shekels; and that it could not contain less, in the days of *Amaziah*, is pretty evident, from the account left us, in 2 *Chron.* xxv. 6. of his having hired an hundred thousand mighty men of valour, out of *Israel*, for an hundred talents of silver. If the talent had then contained less than three thousand shekels, what had been the hire of each of these soldiers? — And the history of *Gebazi*, *Hezekiah*, and many other passages of the *Old Testament*, plainly prove, the talent to have been of a considerable weight.

Another plain point is, that *David* must have left immense treasures, for building the temple, from the vast number of workmen employed, and maintained, for that service, for eleven years: four years in preparing the materials, and seven in putting them together.

Hiram's servants, hired at the rate of twenty thousand measures of wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil, year by year; thirty thousand hewers of wood, in *Lebanon*, (ten thousand of them in constant employment); seventy thousand bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers

hewers of large, and costly stones, in the mountains; stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits, sawed with saws, and joined with unparallelled exactness; and three thousand six hundred overseers of the work; that is, overseers of those who prepared materials for it; besides *five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work* (says the text, *1 Kings ix. 23.*); that is, which oversaw the execution of it; and twenty-four thousand *Levites*, appointed to set it forward, *1 Chron. xxiii. 4.* Add to all these, the workers of precious stones, of gold, and silver, and metals of all kinds. What vast sums of money must have circulated through *Jerusalem*, from the wages of so many men, every year? And how prodigious must the quantity of gold, and silver, left by *David*, be, when this treasure (for this only can account for it) enabled *Solomon* to give gold, and silver in *Jerusalem*, as stones; as the sacred text informs us he did (*2 Chron. i. 15.*)? Add to this, the immense quantity of solid gold, which covered the intire inside of the porch, the *holy*, and the *holy of holies*, and the upper chambers *; the ark, the mercy-seat, the cherubims, the altar of incense, and ten tables of shew-bread; the ten candlesticks, and utensils of all kinds, for the service of the temple, such as dishes, cups, &c. which *Josephus* computes to have been no less than four hundred and forty thousand, of that metal; besides many utensils expressly said, in the scriptures, to be of gold, such as snuffers, lamps, tongs, and spoons, which *Josephus* takes no notice of; and besides all those of silver, which were thirteen hundred and forty thousand.

Another plain point is, that the sacred writers were very careful, and exact, in the accounts left us, of the quantities of money contributed towards this work;

* *Josephus* tells us, (*Antiq. lib. viii. cap. 3.*) that the temple had another building over it, equal to it in its measures. And, therefore, we may fairly conclude, that the *upper chambers*, here spoken of, were the chambers of that building.

work ; when they descend even to the number of drachms contributed, above the number of talents. Nor is there the least ground for suspecting any error, to have crept into the text, or alteration to have ever been made in the numeral words, denoting these quantities.

Another plain point is, that the accounts, left us of the earlier ages of the world, sufficiently evince them to have abounded with gold. And hence, as some learned men think, was derived the fable of the *golden age*. Hence the accounts left us of *Midas*, and *Cræsus* *, whose treasures of gold (to say nothing of silver) were infinite: of *Saluces*, and *Esuboses* †, kings of *Colchis*, who had entire chambers of gold, beams, and posts, and pillars of silver. Hence the ancient *Arabs*, those of *Arabia Felix* particularly, whose gold was purest, and in the greatest quantities, (as *Diodorus Siculus* informs us, *lib. 3.*) bartered gold for iron. And the *Macrobii*, a people of *Ethiopia*, bound their slaves in chains of gold, *Herodotus*, *lib. 3.* And, above all, hence those treasures of *Sardanapalus* §, which, from *Ctesias*'s account of them, are almost incredible. The mines of the earth were then virgin, (as *Pliny* observes) and many rivers gloried in golden sands, whose wealth hath long since been exhausted ; and, therefore, we are not to judge of the wealth of those ages, by our own present poverty.

Another point, which must be confessed, is this : that after *David* had finished his palace, and other buildings, in *Jerusalem*, which was early in his reign, he made no considerable expence, that we know of, to the end of it ; for as to the maintenance of armies, which make the great expence of other princes, I think, it seems agreed among the learned, that his

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* Of whom *Pliny* says, That they possessed an infinite quantity of it ; *in infinitum possederunt*, *lib. xxiii. cap. 3.*

† *Pliny*, *ibid.*

§ Who is supposed by some learned men, to have been king of *Nineveh*, at the time of *Jonah*'s preaching.

cost him, in the ordinary course of things, nothing : each of the tribes supplying, and supporting their own monthly courses ; and, in all cases of extraordinary levies, each man's portion of the great spoils, taken from the enemy, did more than compensate for their pay. So that if *David* had any sure sources, or funds of wealth, he had great opportunities of amassing, and treasuring it up.

The next point, then, to be inquired into, is, What those sources were, from whence it was possible for *David* to drain so much wealth ? And these are confessedly four : husbandry, war, trade, and tribute.

It is well known, that the wealth of the earlier ages originally consisted in the plenty, and goodness of the creatures, and fruits of the earth ; from the sale of which arose, in after-ages, their artificial wealth. Nor can it be denied, that *David* might have abounded in this natural wealth, from the advantage of a country, remarkably fruitful, and blessed, beyond all others, in a rich soil, and happy climate ; and that he neglected no means, to improve these advantages, may fairly, I think, be collected, from the account left us, (1 *Chron.* xxvii. 25, &c.) of the proper, and distinct officers, appointed by him, over his treasures, and store-houses, of all sorts ; in cities, fields, villages and castles ; over the tillage of the earth, over the culture of the vineyards, and over their increase for the wine-cellars ; over the olive-trees, and sycamore-trees *, in the low plains ; and over the cellars of oil ; over the herds, that fed in *Sharon*, and over the herds, in the valleys ; over the camels, over the asses, and over the flocks.

From hence it is natural, and obvious to infer, that *David* had a proper attention, to all the parts, and branches of husbandry. And it is easy to imagine, what an immense flow of wealth might be derived, from this single source, in the course of thirty,

or

* Or, as the *Vulgate* interprets the original word, *ficeta*, fig-yards.

or forty years ; in a rich country, part bordering, and part extended, upon a sea coast, where the trade, and wealth of the whole world then centred.

The next source of *David's* wealth, was war ; which some learned men have imagined to be so rich a one, as were singly sufficient to account for all the wealth *David* left behind him.

As the eastern nations abounded in gold, it is sufficiently evident, from the earliest accounts, left us of those nations, that they abounded in ornaments, at least, of that metal, when they went to battle. This is apparent, from the eighth chapter of *Judges* ; from whence we learn, that the *Midianites* not only wore ear-rings of gold themselves, but likewise adorned, with chains of gold, the necks of their camels. We learn also, from *Numbers* xxxi. that when *Israel* first conquered the *Midianites*, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, brought an oblation to GOD, of the spoil, taken from the enemy, and such as every man amongst them had gotten, (*ver.* 50. and 53.) jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, ear-rings, and tablets ; making in the whole sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. It is true, that as they took the spoil of the whole country, cities, castles, men, and women, but a small part of this treasure, can be placed to the score of the men slain in battle. But it is as true, that if the *Israelite* men of war, who then went to battle, offered only the five hundredth part of their share of the gold, taken from *Midian*, as they offered only the five hundredth part of the beeves, asses, and sheep ; the treasure of gold, then taken in that country, amounted, in the whole, to a very great sum ; for but half of the whole fell to their share. And if this one victory brought in so great a treasure, we may easily imagine, what immense wealth must be raised, from *David's* many victories, over nations much richer.

But besides the personal ornaments, worn by those who went to battle, it is beyond all doubt, that the eastern nations always adorned their weapons, and utensils of war, with the richest metals. And in those nations, where gold abounded, and iron was little known, there is no question, but the weapons themselves were of gold: as *Pliny* gives us to understand, that those of the antient *Gauls* were. And when we learn from the history of *David*, that the *Syrians*, whom he subdued, and slew in such vast multitudes, wore shields of gold, can we doubt, whether their quivers, handles of their swords, &c. were not of the same metal? He was victorious, in about twenty battles, over the richest enemies in the world, from the *Red-sea*, to beyond *Mount Libanus*; and from the *Euphrates*, to the *Mediterranean-sea*. To what an incredible sum must the personal spoils, the rich arms, the military chests, and the gods of gold, and silver*, (always carried to battle with them) of such infinite multitudes, amount? And, in all probability, the spoils of their cities, and countries, to a much greater. To say nothing of the spoils taken from the *Philistines*, *Amalekites*, and others, even before he came to the crown.

The next source of *David's* wealth, was trade.

Solomon, we know, made no conquests: yet had he two ports upon the *Red-sea*; *Eloth*, and *Ezion-geber*, in the land of *Edom*. *David* conquered *Edom*, about the time that he subdued the *Syrians*, 2 *Sam.* viii. 14. Consequently, those ports, and, perhaps, others, were in his hands. And, therefore, we may easily credit *Eupolemus* §, when he tells us, that *David* sent ships with miners to *Urphe*, an island in the

* *Psal.* cxv. 4. *Their idols are silver, and gold.* And *Psal.* cxxv. 15. *As for the images of the heathen, they are but silver, and gold.* And we learn, from the eighth, and seventeenth chapters of the book of *Judges*, that when the *Israelites* fell into the heathen idolatry, they also made them images of gold, and silver.
§ *Euseb. Prepar. lib. ix.*

the *Red-sea*, which had mines of gold: a relation, which is sufficiently confirmed, by the account left us, of *David's* giving three thousand talents of gold, his own private property, pure gold of *Ophir*, (which doubtless is the *Urphe* of *Eupolemus*) to the building of the temple. Nor is it any way probable, that he had no share in the trade of the *Mediterranean*, when such a length of its richest trading coast was in his own hands. What profits he derived, from these branches of trade, is impossible to say; but I think it highly probable, from the nature of the thing, that they were very considerable, and, possibly, immense. But whether his trade were so, or no, it is undoubted, that his tribute was.

Solomon had no wars, made no conquests, or acquisitions of territory*; except that of the single city of *Gezer*, conquered for him, and bestowed upon him, by *Pharaoh*. And, therefore, *David's* tributary revenues will best be estimated, by those of *Solomon*. And what those were, may be estimated two ways: first, From the accounts left us of the expences he made: And, secondly, From the particular mention made of the revenues, paid in to him annually.

As to the first of these: If we suppose the expences of *David's*, and *Solomon's* tables to have been exactly the same, (which most certainly they were not) and estimate only the surplus expences of *Solomon*, in his buildings, his cities, his houses, and their furniture, his women, his horses, and chariots, (which would require volumes to explain) we shall soon be satisfied, to what an immense sum they must amount; and, consequently, what an incredible sum *David* must have saved, and amassed, by his œconomy, in the course of so many years.

O o 3

In

* It is, indeed, said, 2 *Chron.* viii. 3. That he went to *Hamath-zobab*, and prevailed against it; but this I take to be rather the recovery of a revolted city, than a new conquest.

In the next place : his tributes may be estimated, from the richness, and extent of the dominions, subject to him ; *Edom*, all the *Arabias*, and *Syrias*, both on this, and the other side of *Euphrates* *, and the *Palestine* coast.

The mines of *Punon*, or *Phinon*, in *Edom*, as those of *Palestine*, hinted at by *Moses*, *Deut.* xxxiii. were famed, even to the days of the christian martyrs, condemned to them. The *Arabians*, *Pliny* calls the richest nations †. And we have already seen, from *Diodorus Siculus*, that *Arabia Felix* yielded the purest gold, and in the greatest quantity. And as to the *Syrias*, their riches will best be estimated, by the golden shields of *Hadadezer's* army. Here, then, are funds enough of wealth, sufficient for any demand. And yet *David* certainly had others, as appears, from the accounts of *Solomon's* annual income, found in *1 Kings* x. 14, 15, viz. *Six hundred three-score and six talents of gold, besides that he had of the merchant-men, and of the traffick of the spice-merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.*

That *David*, then, had sources enough, for all the treasure he left behind him, is, I think, out of all doubt.

If it be objected, That this expence is disproportioned to the work ; I answer, first, That no man I ever met with, except *Vit'alpandus*, (and such as think after him) hath ever computed the vastness of the work : nor will any man, I believe, ever conceive a right idea of it, who doth not carefully consider, what he (and *Lamy* after him) hath said upon that subject. In the mean time, let any man but think of the treasures of fruit, wood, incense, corn, wine, and oil, (to omit a thousand other things) annually deposited in the temple ; and the vast number of *priests*, *Levites*, guards, porters, attendants, and

* 2 Sam. x. 16, 19.

† *Gentes ditissima*, lib. vi cap. 28.

and officers of all kinds, lodged in it — and I am sure, he will not think all *Vilalpandus's* cellarages, more than sufficient for the one ; nor all his apartments, more than necessary for the other.

In the next place : We are not to imagine, that all the stone, and wood, hewn for that service, were expended upon it ; for we are expressly told, that *Solomon made cedars to be, in Jerusalem, as the sycamores, that are in the vales, for abundance.* And we may be well assured, that none but the very choice of both kinds, were used in the temple. And these, perhaps, were not more than one half of the whole.

But there are two points of the last importance, towards reconciling, and determining this controversy, which none of the critics, that I have met with, have ever considered.

The first is, that in all their computations of expence, no allowance hath been made for the precious stones, with which the inside of the temple was adorned (such as diamonds, rubies, &c.) ; and which, if they then bore any proportion, to the price they bear now, will sufficiently account for any expence, that can well be imagined. And, therefore, if we should agree with the learned *Brerewood*, that *David* left treasure enough, to build the walls of the body of the temple of solid silver, and roof it with gold, yet when we consider, what great portions of the one, and immense masses of the other, might go to the purchase of one single precious stone, we cannot take upon us to pronounce any sum, more than sufficient, for such an expence.

The next point of great importance to reconcile this controversy, is, That, in fact, all the treasure left by *David*, was not expended, upon the building of the temple. This appears clearly, from the seventh chapter of the first book of *Kings*, verse 51. where it is expressly said, *So was ended all the work, that king Solomon made, for the house of the Lord : and Solomon*

brought in the things, which David, his father, had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels; did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord.

I think it plain, that when *David* is said to have prepared, for the house of the LORD, an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, &c. the whole of his treasure, whether in coin, or otherwise, is there recounted; and that there remained a surplussage of that provision, to be deposited, in the treasures of the temple, after the work was finished, is evident, from the passage last quoted.

C H A P. XX.

Adonijah sets up as Heir apparent to the Throne, and asserts his Claim to it. Upon bearing of which, David causes Solomon to be anointed King.

DAVID was now far advanced in years, and the infirmities of age were fallen heavy upon him. The strength of nature was so far abated in him, that cloaths could not keep him warm, in his bed. His physicians, therefore, advised, That a fair, and youthful virgin should be sought for, who might lie in his bosom, and cherish his vital heat; the natural warmth of a young, healthful, human body, being (as physicians observe) best fitted for that end, both in kind, and degree.

If it be asked, How the beauty of the person to be employed, to this purpose, was concerned in *David's* health? I answer, That the beauty here required is, evidently, beauty of complexion: which, as it indicates the health, and temperament of the body, might be of importance, in this case. Possibly too, as *David* was very beautiful himself, they sought for some person of complexion, and constitution likest to his own; and, of consequence, best suited, and most congenial to it. And, therefore, the cavillers at this part of *David's* conduct, are as far from being
able

able naturalists, in this respect, as they are casuists, in many others. And I will be bound to say, that if *David* had taken any other method of recovering, and keeping up, the vital flame ; by wine, for instance, high diets, and cordials, or any other imaginable way ; they would have found all those methods, at least, as exceptionable, as this. *Abisbag*, the *Shunamite*, was found, and thought proper for this purpose ; and was, accordingly, admitted into the number of *David's* wives, but not known by him.

Concubinage was not then deemed criminal : and it will, I hope, be thought no very wild paradox, to venture to surmise, that a modest man can, with less reluctance, suffer his infirmities to be relieved, by a wife, than by any other mortal. And, therefore, I greatly fear, that those gentlemen, who quarrel with *David*, upon this score, are little refined, either in that virtue, or the more elegant decencies of life.

Adonijah, *David's* eldest son, after *Absalom*, (but by another wife) beautiful too, and popular like him, took advantage of his father's infirm state ; assumed the airs, and set up the equipage of heir apparent, to the throne : *He prepared chariots, and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him ;* and gave out openly, that he would be king : although he could not but know, that *Solomon* was designed for that dignity, both by *David*, and God himself.

David had no body to blame but himself, for this misconduct in his son : it was his own excessive indulgence, which inspired this extravagance : for the text tells us, that *his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so ?* Strange weakness in parents, and cruelty to their children, to suffer them to become incorrigible in error, or inveterate in vice, rather than restrain, and check them, whilst correction is kindness !

Adonijah had gained two very considerable men to his party ; *Joab*, the captain of the host, and *Abiathar*,

ibbar, the priest: and when things were sufficiently prepared, summoned his partizans, to a great entertainment, (possibly, under the pretence of a sacrifice) near the stone *Zobeletb*, by the famed fountain of *En-rogel*, not far from *Jerusalem*: where, in the midst of their festivity, and mirth, they scrupled not to treat him, as their king. But *Nathan*, the prophet, was steady to the appointments of Providence, pronounced by his own mouth; and accordingly informed *Bathsheba* of the design, carried on against her son; advising her, to lose no time in acquainting the king of it, in order to prevent it; and letting her know, that he himself would quickly second, and support her, upon that head. *Bathsheba* obeyed the kind monition, waited upon the king, in the instant, and put him in mind of his promise to her, confirmed by a solemn oath, that *Solomon*, her son, should reign after him: whereas, in reality, *Adonijah* then reigned, although his majesty knew nothing of it; and was, at that moment, openly entertaining his adherents, at a great feast, with *Joab*, and *Abiathar*, at their head——adding, that the eyes of all *Israel* were then upon his majesty, to know, whom he would appoint to succeed him, in his throne. Which if he should fail to do, *It shall come to pass*, (says she) *when my lord, the king, shall sleep with his fathers, that I, and my son, Solomon, shall be counted offenders*. Whilst she spake, *Nathan* came in to the king; and doing obeisance, asked, If he had appointed *Adonijah*, his successor, without acquainting him with his purpose? And then proceeded to inform him of the measures, taken by *Adonijah*, to raise himself to the throne.

When *Nathan* came into the king's presence, *Bathsheba* retired: as, *Pliny* tells us, *Cecilius Rufus's* wife did, upon the admission of any intimate friend to her husband; although well fitted to share in all his secrets.

As soon as *Nathan* had done speaking, *David*, without making him any answer, immediately ordered

dered *Bathsheba* to be called in to him again. He was impatient to remove her disquiet, and give her intire satisfaction, in her complaint; and, therefore, as soon as ever she appeared, instantly renewed his oath to her, that as he had solemnly sworn, that *Solomon* should sit upon his throne, he would perform his promise to her, that very day. Upon the hearing of which, *Bathsheba* (saith the sacred writer) *bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord, king David, live for ever.*

Nathan had now retired, from the king's presence, upon *Bathsheba's* approach, as she had done before, upon his; but was quickly called back again, with *Zadok*, the priest, and *Benaiah*, the son of *Jeboiada*, captain of the *Cberethites*, and *Peletbites*, whom *David* commanded to take *Solomon* his son, and set him upon his own mule, and attend him, with his own life-guard, and conduct him to *Gibon*; where *Zadok*, the priest, and *Nathan*, the prophet, should anoint him king over *Israel*, and then proclaim him king, by sound of trumpet: after which they were to return to *Jerusalem*, and place him upon the throne.

To this command *Benaiah* answered, *Amen*; and added a prayer, That God would ratify his choice, support *Solomon*, as he did *David*, and exalt his throne, above the throne of *David*.

Accordingly, *Solomon* was immediately mounted upon *David's* mule, and attended by *Zadok*, and *Nathan*, the *Cberethites*, and *Peletbites*, and other officers of the king, to *Gibon*; and there anointed king, with the sacred oil, deposited in the tabernacle. And they blew the trumpet, and all the people shouted out, *God save king Solomon!* And all the people (says the text) *came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.*

The noise of this rejoicing reached *Adonijah*, and his guests, towards the close of their entertainment: and

and *Joab*, upon hearing the sound of the trumpet, cried out, *Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?* And as he asked the question, *Jonathan*, the son of *Abiathar*, the priest, came, in the instant, with the unwelcome news of *David's* having made *Solomon* king, with the circumstances already related; and added, that he was then actually upon the throne, receiving the compliments, and congratulations of *Israel*: moreover, that *David's* servants had also congratulated him, upon that occasion; beseeching God, that he would make the name of *Solomon*, better than his name; and the throne of *Solomon*, greater than his throne. Upon the hearing of which, *David* bowed himself upon the bed, in prayer, and thanksgiving to God, who had given him a son, to sit upon his throne, under the singular satisfaction of being himself witness to the honour, and bounty, bestowed upon him.

Upon hearing this surprising relation, *Adonijah*, and his guests, struck with terror, (for nothing is more cowardly, or confused, than an anticipated rebel) quickly dispersed. *Adonijah*, conscious of his crime, fled to the altar, and the rest, to their several houses.

News was quickly brought to *Solomon*, That *Adonijah* had laid hold on the horns of the altar, and would not stir thence, 'till *Solomon* should swear to spare his life: upon hearing of which, *Solomon* immediately declared, That if he behaved himself, for the future, as a worthy man, a hair of his head should not be touched; but if wickedness were found in him, he should die.

Upon this assurance, *Adonijah* waited upon the king, and submitted himself to him: and *Solomon* sent him to his own house, in peace.

CHAP. XXI.

A short Digression, being an Essay upon the Character of Bathsheba.

UPON perusing the history of *David's* fall, I found almost every commentator I met with, severe upon the character of *Bathsheba*: some treating her (at least in their insinuations) as a light, and lewd woman; others, as swayed by ambition, in her commerce with *David*; and all, as an hypocrite, in mourning for her husband.

On the other hand, I found her, after this, the wife of a great, and wise king; the mother of a great, and wise king; and, remotely, the mother even of the MESSIAH. Upon further inquiry, I found her honoured, by that great, and wise king, her husband, with the surest marks of true friendship, and esteem, in the decline of life, when passion could make no part of their commerce. I found her honoured, in a very distinguished manner, by that great, and wise king, her son *, when he was in full possession of the supreme power; and, consequently, when no suspicion of interest could abate the merit of his duty †. I found that father, commanding his son, to listen to the wise, and salutary monitions of his mother: and I found precepts, said to be of that mother, and recorded by that son, perfectly tallying with those monitions. And from thence I concluded, as all antient critics, and most

* 1 Kings ii. 19. *And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right-hand.*

† If it be urged, that *Solomon's* subsequent behaviour to his mother, in relation to her petition, in favour of *Adonijah*, is not respectful; I answer, by owning, that he there breaks out into a passion, which neither became him as a king, or as a son: but it must, at the same time, be admitted, that this passion was subsequent to a treatment of his mother, full of distinguished respect, and esteem.

most moderns have done, that the mother of *Lemuel* was *Bathsheba*. Is it possible, I then meditated with myself, that such a father, and such a son, could be deceived, in the character of that woman, for a course of years? Or if they were, could the eye of Providence mistake her?

I then revolved her history, from the beginning, with the utmost care, and exactness I was capable of; and seriously acknowledge, (it may be, to the shame of my sagacity) that I never could find any thing in it, on which to ground the least censure, or suspicion of levity, or lewdness, of hypocrisy, or ambition.

It was not her fault, that she was fair; it was no crime, in a hot clime, and in the close of the day, to bathe herself, for coolness, and cleanliness, if not for legal pollutions. Suppose, she did this in her garden, (which, I verily believe, she did not) the history of *Susanna*, a lady no way blemished in her character of chastity, shews this practice, not uncommon in that country, nor any way accounted criminal. Doth it appear, that she was seduced by inordinate appetite, or by any views of ambition, to violate her duty, to God, and her husband? Not in the least. Had these been her incitements, quite other measures had been taken; the intercourse had then been transacted in secrecy, and by a single messenger. The truth is, *David's* passions were too unruly to brook delay: the text tells us, *he sent messengers, and took * her* (there was no time allowed, either for temptations, or terms); and had criminal commerce with her. More than this we know not; but that *she sanctified herself from her pollution, and returned to her house* — In the original it is, *And she sanctifying herself, &c.* And it is remarkable, that this action is expressed in a form of conjugation, which implies diligence, and solicitude. Now,
suppose

* A word, that sometimes implies *force*, in the Scriptures, and always an incapacity of resistance, in the thing taken.

suppose this word to signify no more, than her care, and anxiety, to be purified, from the legal pollution of her commerce, with *David*, is there no presumption of religious impressions, of a sense, and abhorrence of guilt, in that solicitude? Considering it merely as a ceremonial, *David* was bound to it, as well as she: Why, then, are the Scriptures silent, upon this head, with regard to him? Certainly, they would not, if he had expressed the same solicitude. The reader will make his own inferences.

It is evident enough, that *David's* passion was not indulged to satiety, nor followed with aversion; he forced her not from him, as *Amnon* did *Tamar*. Had pleasure, or ambition been her purpose, she could not have wanted pretences, sufficiently plausible, for continuing it longer; perhaps, for going no more to her own house.

What followed next? *Bathsheba* found herself pregnant: Did she take that occasion to tempt *David* anew, to continue, or repeat the criminal commerce? (Did ever a fairer occasion offer?) Quite otherwise; she seems carefully to have kept out of his sight; and only sent, to let him know her condition: Could modesty do more? For my own part, I see not the least traces of levity, or lewdness, in this conduct: I imagine, I see in it the sure marks of injured, and distressed innocence.

And here, let me be allowed to observe, that this conduct in *David*, and *Bathsheba*, is, perhaps, as strong an instance of refined virtue, as ever was known: A man, seduced by too strong a temptation, to one act of guilt, and, from that moment, religiously abstaining, from one repetition of it (the likeing, and the desire still continuing); nay, when he knew it could not be aggravated, with regard to *Uriah*; when he knew, that *Bathsheba* was with child! Would to God, that all, or any of those, who insult *David's* fall, could glory in any thing, like this abstinence, and self-denial! For my own part, I own,
I have

I have no idea of any thing more refined, in religion, or more heroic, in virtue. To be above the reach of temptation, is to be more than the sons of *Adam*; but religiously, and steadily to abstain from every occasion of it, is the surest character of the sons of God.

It must be owned, there is something very surprising, in *Uriah*'s never once seeing his wife, when *David* sent for him to court. But, as the sacred writers shew this, only in the light of an heroic resolution in him, I shall not take upon me to contemplate upon it, in any other but this, That the hand of God was evidently in it, in order to bring *David*'s secret guilt, to public infamy, for reasons, best known to infinite wisdom. All that I have more to add, is, only to observe, that, if *Bathsheba* was innocent, (as, I verily believe, she was) the providence of God was singularly gracious to her, in guarding her from the distress of such an interview.

It is, I think, agreed on all hands, that *Bathsheba* had no share in her husband's murder, nor was, in any degree, privy to it; she, probably, thought, he fell by the common fate of war: and, therefore, when the Scriptures inform me, that she mourned for him, upon the news of his death, I cannot refine so far, as to pronounce, she did not do so, seriously, and sincerely. *Uriah* was a brave man, and, if he behaved himself, with the same honour, and fidelity, to his wife, as he did, to his prince, his country, and his religion, (and, surely, the presumption, that he did, is strong in his favour) he was well intitled to her highest esteem. To injure, or do indignity to, such a man, even by force, were matter of sufficient concern to a generous, and an upright spirit; and to reflect upon having done it, unforgiven, the greatest aggravation of distress.

When the time of her mourning was over, *David* took her to his house, and she became his wife: had he deemed her a light, or a libertine woman, he would, in

in all probability, not have placed her in the palace ; or placed her there, under a lower character. Nor can I imagine, why he should distinguish her, in this manner, unless from a principle of repairing, to the utmost of his power, the injury he had done her. And it is remarkable, that there is no mention made of any other wife, taken by *David*, after this (except *Abishag*, who was not taken to any of the purposes of marriage) ; nor does it at all appear, from the Scriptures, that he had any other child, by any other woman, after this *.

To all this may be added, That, when God sent *Nathan*, to rebuke *David* for his guilt, there was no share of the guilt charged upon *Bathsheba*. Now we learn from the history of *Ahab*, and *Jezebel*, that when two persons shared in the same guilt, and God sent his prophets to rebuke it, it was not the way of those prophets to reprove one criminal, and leave the other uncensured. *Jezebel*, who contrived the murder of *Naboth*, had, indeed, the most signal share in the judgments of God, denounced against it ; but *Ahab*, who concurred † in it, had also his share to the full. Now *Nathan* was so far from censuring *Bathsheba*, that he placed her, rather in a light of innocence : and, indeed, what can be an apter emblem of innocence, than a *little lamb* ? And, for my own part, I shall not pretend, to see more clearly, into this affair, than *Nathan* did.

But what completes the character of *Bathsheba*, is, her own advice to her son, and his encomium upon her (*Prov. xxxi.*) : the first shews her a wise woman ; and the second, an excellent wife, in every circum-

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stance

* It is indeed said, 1 *Chron. iii. 5.* *These four by Bath-sheba, the daughter of Ammiel.* Then immediately follows, *Ibbar also, &c.* without mention of any other mother. Why then, might not these be the same ?

† 1 *Kings xxi.*

stance of that character ‖. *Solomon* tells us, in the fourth chapter of his *Proverbs*, at the third verse, that he was *tender, and only beloved, in the sight of his mother*: and the beginning of the lecture to *Lemuel*, in this chapter, (*Prov.* xxxi. 2.) where his mother breaks out, at once, into such excess of tenderness, *What, my son!—the son of my womb!—the son of my vows!*—is, to me, a fine comment upon that passage.

David had admonished his son, (*Prov.* vi. 20, &c.) * *to keep the commandment of his father, and not forsake the law of his mother, &c.* For (ver. 23.) the commandment (says he) *is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the ways of life, to keep thee from the evil woman*—And can there be a greater uniformity, than betwixt that monition, and this; *Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that, which destroyeth kings?* And may not the reproofs, that

‖ I know some modern critics have, contrary to the unanimous judgment, and tradition of all antiquity, raised some scruples, upon this head; as if *Lemuel* were not *Solomon*, but some other king, they knew not who. I have examined them, with all the care, and candour I am capable of, and conclude, upon the whole, that their objections were such, as my readers of best understanding would be little obliged to me, either for retailing, or refuting—I shall barely mention that of greatest weight: it is thus; That his mother, thrice in this chapter, when she calls him her son, makes use of the word *bar*, to express it by; a word, no-where used throughout the whole Old Testament, except in the second Psalm, at the twelfth verse. This then is the strength of the objection—That *Solomon* cannot be *Lemuel*, because *Lemuel's* mother calls him son, by a word, which no sacred writer ever made use of before, except *Solomon's* father, upon a like occasion. Besides, the very name sufficiently shews *Lemuel* to be *Solomon*; for *Lemuel* signifies *belonging to God*: And to whom can this, possibly, be applied, so properly as to *Solomon*, to whom God expressly declared, he would be a father? 2 Sam. vii. 14.

* As critics have considered the first nine chapters of the *Proverbs*, only as a preface, to what is properly called the book of *Proverbs*, the attentive reader will find all the precepts, from the beginning of the fourth chapter to the end of the ninth, to be only recitals, of *David's* instructions, to his son *Solomon*.

that follow, justly be intitled, reproofs of instruction?

When these *reproofs of instruction* are recited, then follows a poem, in praise of an accomplished woman: and, surely, nothing can be more natural, than the judgments of the best critics upon it; that *Iemuel* here characterizes his mother, in a poem written in honour of her: and if this mother be *Bathsheba*, as, I think, there is little doubt but it is, then, is her conduct to *Uriah* fully justified, in these words: *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.* This seems to me, peculiarly to characterize the prudent, and faithful wife of a generous soldier: the husband of such a wife, was under no necessity of enriching himself, by the vices of his profession; her frugal, and prudent management of his affairs would, undoubtedly, do it: and who knows, but this reflection, might have been added, to wipe off some aspersions, cast upon *Bathsheba*? especially, when we consider the words, that immediately follow, which acquit her of any share, in the guilt of his death: *She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of his life.*

If these reasonings be right, (and I am greatly deceived, if they be not) then, I think, far from vilifying the character of *Bathsheba*, her son may be fairly justified, in concluding of her, as he does, *ver. 29, &c. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty vain; but a woman, that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised! give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

C H A P. XXII.

David calls an Assembly of his People, in which Solomon's Election to the Throne is confirmed. His Speech, and Thanksgiving to God, upon that Occasion. His last Instructions to his Son Solomon.

WHETHER *David's* resentment, at *Adonijah's* late attempt upon the crown, or the joy conceived by him, at seeing his son *Solomon* seated, upon the throne, and God's promises to him, and his own to *Bathsheba*, so happily fulfilled, roused him from his languor, and gave a new spring to his blood; or whether his disorder was one of those loads, under which languid nature sometimes labours, until, aided by exterior, vital, warmth, it is enabled to throw it off, (instances of which are well known in the world, and famed in history) we cannot say: we are only informed thus far; That he recovered his strength, and spirits to such a degree, before he died, as to be able to call an assembly of his people, and get his election of *Solomon* to the throne confirmed in it.

This assembly was composed of all orders, and degrees of men, of eminence, in the nation, both civil, and military: *David* (saith the text) *assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies, that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and the captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance, and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, into Jerusalem.*

When they were convened, *David* addressed himself to them in a speech, the most natural, and unlaboured of any I have ever met with; but at the same time, as every sentence in it flows clearly, from
the

the fulness of his heart, every thing he says, affects, and interests the hearer, and carries him directly into all the speaker's views.

To do justice to this oration, I should transcribe it intire; but I chose rather to select some few passages from it, that so, by raising the unscriptural reader's curiosity, I may send him with more eagerness to the original.

It is probable, that the king had a throne erected in the assembly, and that he, and his son sat together upon it: although the sacred historian informs us no further, than that *David the king stood up upon his feet, and said —Hear me, my brethren, and my people.*

When he had thus engaged their attention, by these kind compellations; he proceeds to tell them, That he had it in his heart to build an house of rest, for the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, and for a foot-stool for his, and their GOD; and had made preparations accordingly; but was expressly prohibited by GOD, to proceed in the work, (because he had been a man of war, and had shed blood) who had chosen his son *Solomon* to carry it on, and complete it; with solemn assurances of establishing his throne, if he continued in his duty, and obedience. And, forasmuch as the happiness of his people, was nearly interested in this establishment, he proceeds to apply himself to them, in the following manner:

Now, therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep, and seek for, all the commandments of the Lord, your God; that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you, for ever.

Then turning to his son, with a noble apostrophe —*And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and*

understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts : if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now ; for the Lord hath chosen thee, to build an house for the sanctuary : be strong, and do it.

How strongly does he urge the obligations, that lay upon him, to prosecute the work, with all possible attention, and application, from the distinguished honour done him, by Almighty God, by his special designation of him, to that noble office !

Then *David* gave *Solomon* the plan of the whole work, with all its courts, treasuries, and apartments, all which he had by the Spirit ; with a complete scheme of the whole temple-service ; courses of the priests, *Levites*, officers, and attendants of all kinds, with exact patterns of all instruments, vessels, and utensils, for every kind of service ; together with sufficient quantities of the several metals, of which they were to be formed ; gold by weight, for things of gold ; and silver, for things of silver.

This done, *David* again exhorts his son, to resolution, and vigour, in carrying on the work ; and assures him of the assistance both of the people, and princes, towards it.

Then turning to his people, he tells them, That *Solomon*, his son, whom alone God had chosen, for this mighty undertaking, was young, and tender, and the work great ; for the palace was not for man, but the LORD God : That, as for himself, he had made the best preparations he could for it ; gold, and silver, brass, and iron, and wood, and precious stones of all kinds, and colours : moreover, because he had set his affections, upon the house of his God, he had, over and above all his other preparations, provided of his own proper goods, *three thousand talents of pure gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses.* And when he had said this, he put the question directly

rectly to them, and asked, *Who amongst them was willing to consecrate his service, that day unto the Lord?* Upon which, the chief men of the assembly contributed chearfully to the work; and made up, amongst them, five thousand talents of gold, and ten thousand drachms; and of silver, ten thousand talents; and of brass, eighteen thousand talents; and one hundred thousand talents of iron: to which were added precious stones of various kinds, by all such as had them. *Then (saith the sacred historian) the people rejoiced; for they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced, with great joy. Wherefore David blessed the Lord, before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our father, for ever and ever.*

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty! For all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted, as Head, above all.

Both riches, and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all — And in thine hand it is, to make great, and to give strength unto all.

Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

But who am I, and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly, after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

O Lord, our God, all this store, that we have prepared, to build thee an house, for thine holy name, cometh of thine own hand, and is all thine own.

I know also, my God; that thou triest the heart, and best pleasure in uprightness.

As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart, I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

O Lord, God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Israel*, our fathers, keep this for ever, in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee.

And give unto *Solomon*, my son, a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes; and to do all these things; and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

And *David* said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord, your God.

And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord, and the king.

And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord, on the morrow after that day; even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink-offerings, and sacrifices, in abundance for all *Israel*:

And did eat, and drink before the Lord, on that day, with great gladness. And they made *Solomon*, the son of *David*, king, the second time; and anointed him unto the Lord, to be the chief governor, and *Zadok* to be priest.

I cannot help adding, that when I lift up my eyes to heaven, the true fountain of all excellent endowments, and dispositions; and contemplate the greatness of *David's* soul, the nobleness of his sentiments, and the humility of his heart, all calculated, conspiring, and bent upon the one great purpose, of promoting the glory of God, and, in consequence of that, perpetuating the felicity of his people; I cannot help looking down, upon all the other princes of the earth, with pity †.

David

† Particularly, a late profligate prince of our own; who, instead of contributing to make *St. Paul's* church, what the architect had designed it, the glory of his nation, and capital, pinched forty thousand pounds from the fund, assigned for it, to very shameful purposes.

David seems to have survived but a very little while, after this great, and signal transaction of his reign : but before he expired, he sent for *Solomon* ; told him his condition, That he was going the way of all the earth ; and exhorted him to fortitude, and manly resolution, in the conduct of his life ; and, well knowing, that true religion was the only solid support of true fortitude, solemnly charged him, with his dying breath, to pay a strict obedience to the commands of God, and continue stedfast in his duty to him ; as he hoped for his protection, and favour, and the continuance of his posterity, upon the throne ; as God had promised they should, *if they took heed to their way, to walk before him in truth, with all their heart, and with all their soul.*

He next reminded him of *Joab's* disobedience, to his own commands, in relation to *Absalom*, together with his repeated murders : and charged him not to let them go unpunished ; a charge as wise, as it was just ! Nor did he forget, even in the article of death, the gratitude he owed to *Barzillai*, the *Gileadite* ; but intreated his son to renew it, in his posterity, with the distinguished honour of letting them be of those who eat at his own table : and concluded with advising him, in relation to *Shimei* ; whom although he himself had pardoned, his son should not hold him guiltless ; but (as the text is generally understood) *bring his boar head to the grave with blood* : An advice, greatly, but, as I think, unjustly, censured as revengeful, and cruel ; as shall be shewn hereafter.

C H A P. XXIII.

Some Account of the Temple-Service. David's Death.

HAVING, in the last chapter, mentioned the scheme of the temple-service, delivered by *David*, to *Solomon*, together with the plans of the buildings, and pattern of the utensils ; I hope, I shall be indulged, in endeavouring to give the common reader some idea of that service, as far as I can collect it, from the sacred writings ; referring my readers, of more curiosity, to such as have written, professedly, upon that subject.

David had, in the preceding part of his reign, settled the service of the tabernacle, both at *Gibeon*, and *Jerusalem* ; but as those scenes were small, and the necessary attendants few, another regulation was now necessary, for the service of the temple, which was incomparably more magnificent. Accordingly, this regulation was made, and established by God himself, as we learn from 2 *Chron.* xxix. 25. where we are informed, that when *Hezekiah* restored the service of the temple, *he set the Levites in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Ged, the king's seer, and Nathan, the prophet : for so was the commandment of the Lord, by his prophets.*

But we must take this matter higher, in order to form a clearer conception of it.

Levi had three sons, *Gershon*, *Kobath*, and *Merari*. From the second of these were descended *Moses*, and *Aaron*. *Aaron*, and his descendants, were set apart and consecrated for the priesthood, by the special appointment of Almighty God *. And the rest of their brethren, the other descendants of *Levi*, were appointed to attend them, and minister unto them, in things sacred. And among these, were the sons of

* *Exod.* xxviii.

of *Moses*; without any distinction, or pre-eminence, above their brethren, the other descendants of *Levi*: which, most certainly, was not the work either of human ambition, pride, or policy. Nay more; we hear of no honour, or office of dignity, borne by any one of them, for about five hundred years; until *David* made *Shebuel*, the son of *Gershon*, the son of *Moses*, ruler of the treasures; and set his brethren, by *Eliezer*, over the treasures of the dedicated things (1 *Chron.* xxvi. 24, 25, 26.)

The peculiar office of *Aaron*, and his descendants, is thus explained (1 *Chron.* xxiii. 13.): *And Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he, and his sons for ever; to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless, in his name, for ever.* And we learn, from many parts of the Scripture, that a principal part of this ministration, was the offering up of sacrifices, and blowing with trumpets over them, *on the days of their gladness, and new moons* (*Numb.* x. 10.).

The several parts, and branches of the *Levitical* office, are summed up, 1 *Chron.* xxiii. at the 28th, and following verses. From whence we learn, that it was their business to wait upon the sons of *Aaron*, for the service of the house of the LORD, in all its parts. To them belonged the care, and the cleansing, of all its courts, chambers, and vessels of all kinds; the keeping of all its treasures, and the standards of all measure, and size, and all things necessary for the burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings; the provision of the shew-bread, fine flour, unleavened bread, incense, &c. It was their business to attend upon the morning, and evening service of the temple, to celebrate the praises of God, and give him thanks: some with voices, and some with musical instruments of various kinds. In one word, they were the guards, treasurers, stewards, choir, band of music, and chamberlains, of this great palace.

lace. And the *Netthinims* ministered under them, as menial servants, in all the meaner offices.

By the appointment of *Moses*, the *Levites* were numbered from thirty years * old, and upwards, for the service of the tabernacle. And according to that regulation, their numbers, and appointments stood thus, in the days of *David*: Their whole number was thirty-eight thousand; of which twenty-four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; six thousand were officers, and judges; four thousand were to be the guards † of the temple; and four thousand were to praise the LORD, with the musical instruments, which *David* had invented for that purpose: but as the service of the temple required a vast many more hands, than the service of the tabernacle, by *David's* last regulation, (doubtless, authorized by divine appointment) the *Levites* were separated for the service of GOD, from twenty years old, and upwards; which added considerably to the numbers now mentioned, in their several appointments, and provinces.

David, not long before his death, gathered together all the princes of *Israel*, with the priests, and the *Levites*; and, in their presence, divided the priests, into twenty-four courses, by lot, under the principal men of *Aaron's* descendants, to be governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of GOD; and had them registered, according to the order,

* There is a difficulty in this point, which should be reconciled: By the appointment in the fourth chapter of *Numbers*, verse the third, the *Levites* were to enter into the service of the tabernacle from thirty years, and upward; whereas, *Numb. viii. 24.* they are ordered to wait upon the service of the tabernacle, from twenty-five years old, and upward. But this is reconciled by *Maimonides*, who says they were obliged to spend five years, in learning the duties of their ministry, before they were admitted to minister, in the court of the priests.

† So the word should be translated, which in our *English* version is interpreted *porters*.

order, in which their lot fell, by *Sbemaiah*, the scribe, in the presence of the king, and princes, and *Zadok*, the priest, and *Abimelech*, the son of *Abiathar* * ; each course to pay a weekly attendance, at the temple, in their turn. The other *Levites* he divided in the same manner, under the several heads of their families, and according to their several offices. And then setting course against course, he made them cast lots for the order, in which they were to officiate, without any regard to seniority, or dignity ; and also to determine what course of guards, singers, &c. should attend, with the correspondent course of priests.

This institution carried one great national advantage with it (and, possibly, many more, not now to be recounted, or conceived) ; inasmuch as this weekly circulation of priests, and *Levites*, as well as the monthly one of the military men, enlarged acquaintance, diffused friendship, and circulated the civility, and politeness of the court, and arts, and elegance of the capital, together with religion, throughout the realm.

The men skilled in song, were found to be two hundred eighty-eight : and, therefore, by this regulation, twelve of these were to stand with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, on common days, (and the whole number, upon the great festivals) *every morning, to thank, and praise the Lord, and likewise at even* † : and were joined by, at least, one hundred and sixty-six of their brethren, who praised the LORD, upon instruments of various sorts, on common days ; and by, at least, four thousand, upon the great festivals.

We learn from the first chapter of *St. Luke*, that when the priest went into the temple, to offer the incense, the whole multitude of the people were at their prayers without. And we learn from this regulation of *David's*, that when the anthem began, it

* 1 *Chron.* xxiv. 6.

† 1 *Chron.* xxiii. 30.

it was performed by twelve voices, accompanied by, at least, one hundred and sixty-six instruments.

It is agreed, on all hands, that the number of fingers in the temple, must not be less than twelve ; but might be increased as much as was thought proper ; and must, in the ordinary course of things, have been increased ; because the children of these fingers, being bred to the profession of their parents, were admitted into the temple with them, to make the chorus more complete.

The number of the particular kinds of musical instruments, employed in the temple service, is nowhere determined ; but the *Jews* are of opinion *, that the trumpets could not be less than two, nor more than one hundred and twenty : not less, because of God's command, *Numb. x. 2.* to make two trumpets ; nor more than one hundred and twenty, because no more were made use of, at the dedication of the temple, *2 Chron. v. 12.*

This is a short, imperfect sketch of the divine worship, instituted by *David* ; as it was celebrated, in its ordinary magnificence : A magnificence, which, even in this imperfect account of it, the greatest princes of our world are not now able to equal, upon the greatest occasions ! And as to that of the great festivals, not all the princes of *Europe*, combined, are able to come up to it.

David well knew of what vast consequence, the establishment of the publick worship of God, in true piety, and purity, was, to the virtue, and felicity of a people ; inasmuch as all religion depends upon it, and would, without it, absolutely fail, and cease from amongst men, in the compass of a few years, and, therefore, wisely judged it adviseable, to allure men to it, by all the advantages of a graceful, solemn, and delightful magnificence. And to this end, there is good ground to believe from the text, that

* See *Lightfoot de Ministerio Templi.*

that the enlargement of the number of men, assigned to the several offices of religion, was the last publick act of *David's* life, 1 *Cbron.* xxiii. 27 *. Blessed conclusion of a life gloriously employed, and ended ! employed in chastizing iniquity, in extirpating inveterate, and incorrigible corruption, in enlarging his dominions, to the bounds assigned them by Almighty God, in establishing his people in peace, and happiness, and doing justice, and judgment ; but chiefly employed in propagating the glory of God, with ardent, and incessant zeal ! And ended, in enlarging the dignity, and magnificence of his worship, with his last breath !

Thus, in the style of the sacred writer, 1 Cbron. xxix. 26, 27, 28. David, the son of Jesse, reigned over all Israel. And the time that he reigned over Israel, was forty years ; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour : and Solomon, his son, reigned in his stead.

He died with the satisfaction of seeing his own son, his successor, the wisest, and the hopefullest prince of the whole earth ; and with the assurance of God's peculiar favour to his posterity ; from whence he had already (in the clearest light of prophetick vision) seen † the MESSIAH, the LORD of Life, to arise ; of whose dominion, and the increase of his government, and glory, he well knew (by the Spirit of God upon him) *there shall be no end.* To Him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, and power, and praise, for evermore.

* For by the last words of *David*, the Levites were numbered, from twenty years old, and above.

† This appears manifestly, from many parts of the *Psalms*, particularly, the seventy-second.

C H A P. XXIV.

David's Character discussed, with regard to his Polygamy, and the Murder of Uriah.

IT is, I hope, by this time, sufficiently evident, to the candid, and considering reader, that *David* was a very extraordinary, and even a wonderful man.

But still it may be objected, That however *David's* character may be otherwise advantageously distinguished, he is not however acquitted of polygamy, murder, and adultery.

I own it ; but what will his ingenious calumniators gain by the concession ? I know no man exempt from error, superior to surprize, or out of the reach of temptation to sin. *David* is himself a signal instance to the contrary. But still I cannot think him capable of a deliberate, determined, repeated violation of the will of God, for a series of years. There is nothing so saturnine, so black, so hellish, in his complexion. For this reason, I can by no means bring myself to believe, that he would have continued in the sin of polygamy, (as he did) knowing it to be a transgression of the law of God. Polygamy, I humbly apprehend, was more the vice of the age, than of *David* ; and, therefore, all the inference that I shall make, from his conduct, in that point, is this ; That, self evident as the law of nature may now seem, it was then too dark, even for the guidance of a prophet, left, in that instance, uninspired.

And yet, if we were to define, and estimate this practice, by the rules of reason, the natural evils, and ill consequences, which do, and ever must await it, in the ordinary train of things, sufficiently demonstrate it, to be destructive of the human felicity ; and, consequently, vicious, and unlawful : nay, one would think, that *David* himself could not fail of being

being fully convinced, of this truth, from his own experience. For what was the effect of his polygamy, in his own house, and to himself? Incest, murder *, rebellion! The incest of two sons, the rebellion, and death of two sons, and the murder of one, by the hand of his brother! And yet, so utterly uninforming is this evidence, from the nature of things, unenlightened, and unaided by revelation; that rebellion, murder, and incest united, nay, repeated rebellion, repeated incest, created no conviction, in the heart of a *David*, or a *Solomon*.

As to *David's* guilt in relation to *Uriah*, I know no one that ever yet set him up for more than mortal: and is there such a thing, was there ever such a thing, in this world, as an unfinning mortal? our blessed Saviour, CHRIST JESUS, only, excepted. And is *David's* character to be meanly esteemed of, upon this account? Shew us those unfinning heroes, that are to be preferred to him. They are not, I am sure, *Cæsar*, nor *Alexander*, nor *Pompey*, nor *Antony*, nor *Sylla*, nor *Lysander*, nor even *Scipio*, however illustrious, and celebrated, for one instance of chastity †.

These are, indeed, sounding, and glorious names, which take early possession of our highest admiration, and esteem: these heroes of the Heathen world, were actors, in greater, and more shining scenes. Pomp, and prejudice delude our judgments, in their favour, and we are apt to think a little king of *Judea* contemptible, upon the comparison; but we forget, that *David* did, by his piety, his prowess, and his wisdom, (aided by the Spirit of God) erect himself, from a private man, into the greatest monarch of the *East*, or of his age, I had almost said, of any age: A monarchy, not signally great, in extent §,

Q q

but

* *Tamoor*, *Amnon*, *Absalom*, *Adonijah*.

† A virtue for which he was, otherwise, no way distinguished.

§ Altho' reaching from the *Red Sea* to mount *Libanus* (inclusive), and from the *Mediterranean* to the *Euphrates*.

but surprizingly great, in all that constitutes the true grandeur, and strength of states; men, virtue, valour, and wealth.

Herodotus observes of *Xerxes*, that there were in his army, πολλοὶ μὲν ἄνθρωποι, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἄνδρες, *much people, but few men*; a great croud, but few soldiers; whereas all *David's* army consisted of chosen warriors: inso-much that the comparatively little dominion of *Ju-dea*, and its appendages, could, upon any exigency, send more effective forces into the field, in two days, under *David*, than the whole empire of the *East* could, in so many years, under *Darius*, or *Xerxes* *.

This important lesson hath *David* left to princes, in his own example; as his son hath done, in his precepts, (*Prov.* xiv. 28.) *In the multitude of people, is the king's honour.* The true grandeur of princes consists not, in extending their dominions, but in multiplying, and blessing their people; and above all, in living, and acting in such a manner, as to diffuse, and fix this one precept in their hearts; *Fear God, and honour the king.*

In one word, we forget that *David* is, in his personal character, vastly superior to any one hero, of all antiquity. It is, indeed, a mix'd character; and where is the character, at least, where is the great character,

* When *David* ordered the people to be numbered, *Joab* made a return of thirteen hundred thousand valiant men, that drew the sword in *Israel*, and *Judah*: that is, there were so many men of proved, experienced courage; but the whole number of trained, disciplined men, in that little state (no mention made of gar-risons, and two whole tribes excluded) were more than a million and a half (besides an immense number of proselytes, and tributaries).

This account of the matter reconciles, and is the natural interpretation of, those two passages, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. and 1 *Chron.* xxi. In the first of which it is said, 'That there were, in *Israel*, eight hundred thousand valiant men, that drew the sword: and in the second it is said, 'That all they of *Israel* were a thousand thousand men, that drew sword.

character, that is not? You may as well expect to find a *sun* without spots, as a great *genius*. The utmost that can be expected is, that the glory should be greatly predominant; and in *David*, it unquestionably is so; is so to such a degree, that *Cæsar*, or *Alexander*, in point of personal accomplishments, and true sublimity of soul, are not once to be named with him: And however this may, at first sight, appear a paradox, I should be sorry to see even an enemy, hardy, or ignorant enough, to give them the pre-eminence, upon due deliberation.

It is true, this great man had great blemishes: let the greatest of them be calmly, and candidly considered.

David's commerce with the wife of *Uriah* was, at worst, a sudden, and tumultuous act of guilt: his guilt was not, even in the impeachment of the prophet, an inmate, whom he was wont to entertain; but a stranger, a traveller, that surprised him—He was ashamed of it—He would have concealed it—He endeavoured—He could not hide it—He could not bear to have it exposed—It must be hid—Nothing but murder could hide it—*Uriah* must die, or *Bathsheba* must—*Uriah*, by the hands of *Ammon*, or *Bathsheba*, by the hands of justice—Distressful, and distracting alternative!—Honour would attend the fate of *Uriah*; infamy must attend that of *Bathsheba*. *Uriah* was a brave man, and a faithful soldier: Could *David* ever bear to behold the brave man, he had abused, made privy to that abuse? Could that brave man bear to survive that abuse?—Would not murder, in this case, be a kind of mercy? Whereas, on the other hand, to desert *Bathsheba*, were the height of cruelty—To abandon the woman he had undone—to abandon to infamy, whom he had seduced (I had almost said, forced) to guilt—Could the lowest degree of honour allow this? Could any degree of humanity endure it?

Such are the accursed entanglements of sin, such the workings, and gradations of it, in the distracted, bewildered, breast, that admits it: millions have been lost, in these labyrinths of guilt; but none, sure, in any more intricate, and perplexing, than this! Are all such to be given up, as abandoned? Is there no room for repentance, for amendment, for reconciliation, in such a case? God forbid! Is it fair then, to consider *David*, only in the light of guilt? Or should he, in common justice, be estimated, as all other men are, by the main of his life?

One thing I will venture to advance; That the man, who reads *David's* works, considers his exploits, and weighs his character, (with all its defects) and doth not, at the same time, find himself little, and contemptible, upon the comparison, needs no heavier imputation of vanity, ignorance, and arrogance.

It is but too easy to fall into temptation; and what is yet worse, from a less guilt to a greater: *All vice stands upon a precipice*, say the poets; the descent is but too easy*; the difficulty is to reascend: millions have fallen, have sinned, as *David* did; but who ever repented, and recovered, like him? Revolve his whole life, before this evil accident; it is almost one train of a wise, a generous, a pious, and a valiant conduct! Revolve his whole life, from the hour of this guilt, and you will find it little else, than one train of humiliation, and repentance before God; and this too, even after assurance of pardon, from the mouth of God himself, by his prophet: which is in the place of ten thousand proofs of a refined piety, and exalted virtue.

* This is finely illustrated, in that emblematical description, viz.

—————*Facilis descensus Averni:*
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hic labor, hoc opus est—————

ture. Or, if he varied his conduct, it was only from penance to praise; to turn all his thoughts, and attention, to employ his whole heart, and soul, to the glory, and in the service, of God; of that God, *who pardoned all his sins, and crowned him with mercy, and loving-kindness.* And if, after all this, the scriptures are to be reviled, for styling this man, in this character, *A man after God's own heart,* What is to be revered?

And after all, What if this great man's fall should be found, upon a fair inquiry, matter of infinite consolation, to those very men, that insult it most? It is to be presumed, that their reproaches upon *David*, arise from their solicitude, for the interests of virtue; and what if this instance of *David's* fall, should be found the truest support of that interest? Rewards, and punishments are allowed to be the great engines, by which it hath pleased God to govern the moral world. And, therefore, there is nothing, in which the interest, and felicity of that world, is so nearly concerned, as in the rewards of virtue, and chastisements of vice. And if so, I challenge all mankind to produce any one instance, from the foundation of the world, wherein virtue was so signally rewarded, and guilt so signally chastised *, as in that of *David*; consequently, in which true religion, and true virtue, are so nearly, and intimately interested, as in the history of his rise, and fall, and recovery; his advancement to the divine favour, and every earthly honour, by virtue; his fall from both, by sin; and his recovery, by repentance. It will not, I believe, be denied, that if the highest offence against God, made a restoration to his favour desperate, the cause of virtue were undone, and no man would attach himself to it, upon such terms; upon assurance of being finally reprobated, and re-

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jected

* See chap. iii. of this book.

jected by God, upon the first fall. Could it be once imagined, that mercy made no part of the character of the Almighty, he might, indeed, from that moment, be dreaded, and detested, as a tyrant; but he could no more be loved, and revered, as a father. And, therefore, *David*, with as much penetration, as piety, begs to be pardoned, and restored, to the favour of God, from this motive, that, if he were so treated, he should *teach transgressors the ways of God, and sinners should be converted unto him*—Psal. li. ver. 13. Again, *Psal. cxxx. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who shall stand? But forgiveness is with thee, that thou mayst be feared.*

Happy for mankind, that there is such an instance (an authentic instance) of falling virtue, and recovering guilt! An instance, so fitted to mortify the vanity of virtue, and the merit of exalted piety; and to raise the power, and price of humble penitence; to abate the pride of self-sufficiency, and support the hope of frailty! Who can confide in his own strength, when he sees a *David* fallen? And who can despair of divine mercy, when he sees him forgiven? Sad triumph of sin, over all that is great, and excellent, in man! Glorious triumph of repentance, over all that is shameful, and dreadful, in sin!

C H A P. XXV.

David's Character considered, in Friendship, and in Enmity.

AS *David's* is a very distinguished character, and no one, that I know, hath ever taken the pains, to place it, in a true light ; the reader will, I hope, not think me tedious, if I attempt to enlarge a little, upon some parts of it ; which have, in my humble opinion, been much less considered, than they deserve.

To begin then : *David's* is, perhaps, the noblest instance of friendship, yet known to the world (one only excepted) : A friendship, which could inspire him, with the generous confidence of trusting the secret of his divine designation to the kingdom, to that very man, who was immediately to be affected by it ! Such a friendship implies every thing, that generosity, and magnanimity can inspire. And that *Jonathan* was fully in this secret, appears clearly, from 1 *Sam.* xx. A friendship, superior to the rivalry of empire, needs no higher praise, and fears no rival. It is true, *Jonathan's* unparalleled generosity gave him a noble claim to this confidence ; and, on the other hand, the unparalleled generosity of this confidence, exacted a suitable return, and found it ; and was, in truth, almost sufficient to inspire it into a soul, less noble, and enlarged, than that of *Jonathan*. But, at the same time, it must be observed, that nothing less, than a full conviction of *David's* divine designation to the throne, could make his rival in empire, become the guardian of his life : what was, at once, the perfection of piety, and friendship, upon that supposition, had been the height of folly, and infatuation, upon any other (and *Jonathan's* is too great a character to be debased, by

such vile surmises). I will not take upon me to pronounce which ought to be preferred, upon the comparison: *David's* was, perhaps, the nobler friendship; and *Jonathan's* the more amiable: not that *David's* was defective, even in what may be called the softness, and infirmity of friendship; inasmuch as we are assured, that, in the distress of parting, he exceeded (1 Sam. xx. 41.). But however that may be contested, this, I believe, will easily be allowed, that no other instance of friendship (except that of JESUS CHRIST to his disciples) ever yet exceeded (I firmly believe, none ever equalled) either.

What is singular in *David's* character is, that he knew so well how to reconcile friendship, and royalty. Other princes have had confidants; but *David* had a friend; other princes have had partners, in their pleasures, and sharers, in the secrets of their guilt; but *David's* was a friendship of a very different complexion; a commerce, and a communication, of a very different kind. The principles, upon which his friendship was founded, and the refined, and delicate sense he had of that noble intercourse, are best seen, in that tender complaint, at the fifty-fifth Psalm——*But it was thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked, in the house of God, as friends. The beauty, and energy of the original is inexpressible: We, who sweetened counsel, and walked, in the house of God, together.*

The man, that hath a heart truly turned to friendship, will feel something in those words, which no other, upon the subject, ever yet came up to; the throbbings of his own breast, will be their best comment.

And that *David* was not wanting to his son, upon this subject, may very reasonably be concluded, from the many excellent precepts, and fine reflections

flexions upon friendship, scattered through his *Proverbs* *.

In that infinite number of idle objections, ignorantly urged against the Scriptures, this also hath been one; That they no-where recommend friendship, or the love of our country. To this I shall only answer at present, That if the fairest, and loveliest examples of any excellence, are the best recommendations of it, this, I hope, will no longer be made an objection.

But *David's* generosity was not confined to friendship; it was no less eminent in enmity. There is not, perhaps, one instance of so unjust, so ungrateful, and so inveterate a persecution, as he suffered from *Saul*: this I am sure of, there is no example, (but one) of such a superiority over revenge, and so noble a remission of injuries, throughout the whole compass of history! To have his mortal enemy, twice, absolutely, in his power, and not so much as suffer him to be slain! Nay, not only his mortal enemy, but his only obstacle to empire, and yet, not suffer that obstacle to be removed †!

There is an united grandeur, and goodness, in this conduct, which innobleth the character of *David*, far beyond the ordinary idea of human excellence. And if, in this conduct, at least, *David* was not *the man after God's own heart*, who ever was? A common man would, nay, a great man might, have thought, that the providence of God had put his enemy in his power; and, therefore, the occasion was not to be lost. These, it is evident, were the sentiments of his followers; when *Saul* was found single, defenceless, and, in all probability, asleep, in the cave: (1 Sam. xxiv. 4.) *And the men of David*

* Besides the assurance we have, that he also had a friend, 1 Kings iv. 5.

† N. B. *Jonathan*, the heir apparent to the throne, desired only to be second to *David*, 1 Sam. xxiii. 17.

vid said unto him, Behold the day, of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand ; that thou mayst do to him, as it shall seem good unto thee. Yet, the highest injury, all this could tempt him to, was, the cutting off *Saul's* skirt of his robe : and we find, that *his heart smote him*, even for that.

Not content with this, he soon after ran the greatest hazard of his life, to shew another instance of generosity, yet greater, if possible ! He stole into *Saul's* camp, in the dead of the night, with only one companion (1 *Sam. xxvi.*) ; found *Saul* again asleep, and unarmed ; his companion begg'd only for leave to smite him, and was refused ; refused upon such principles, as no Heathen hero had an idea of : *As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him ; or his day shall come to die ; or he shall descend into battle, and perish,* 1 *Sam. xxvi. 10.*

Compare this, ye boasters of Heathen virtue, with the fabled prowess of *Ulysses*, and *Diomedes*, or *Alexander's* rant * of scorning to steal a victory ; or what else, of whom else ye please ; and then, exult in your comparison !

As I have nothing in view, but the manifestation of truth, I will not dissemble, that *David's* character, as a generous enemy, hath been greatly impeached, by his last dying charge to his son, in relation to *Joab*, and *Shimei* ; on both whom he desired vengeance should be taken, for those crimes, which he seemed to have forgiven in the one, by suffering them to go so long unpunished ; and which he expressly forgave in the other, and confirmed that forgiveness, by an oath, that he should not die.

To

* I call this a rant, because it was not his true reason, for declining to invade *Darius's* camp, by night : his true reason, if I rightly remember *Arrian's* account of it, was, because in the night, chance, and tumult reign ; whereas *Alexander's* dependence for victory, was upon the fortitude, and military skill of his army.

To the first of these I answer, That *Joab's* murders were crimes, which *David* never did forgive; and, very probably, thought he could not, in contradiction to the express commands of God: and, therefore, that guilt, which he himself wanted power to punish *, and which he only forbore to punish, because he wanted power; he wisely, and religiously recommended to his son to expiate, by the blood of the offender, that his family, and his kingdom, might be clear of it.

The judicious author of the *Apologue de David*, (*Journal de Trevoux*, Tom. 3.) hath a conjecture upon this point, which is, at once, very ingenious, and very probable: he imagines, that *David* proposed the prize of the captain-generalship, to the first that should scale the walls of *Sion*, upon a prospect, that somebody else might gain that prize, and *Joab's* authority be diminished by that means: but his felicity defeated the design.

He, after this, took measures to depose him, in favour of *Amasa*, but was defeated, also in that design.

Joab was his near kinsman, he was valiant, and, in other respects, faithful to him; and *David* had no personal pique to him, before the death of *Abshalom* (and he would have put him to death before that, had he been able): What, then, but duty could sway him, in this conduct, against so many prejudices?

As

* 2 Sam. iii. 28, 29, 39.

28. And afterward, when *David* heard it, he said, I, and my kingdom are guiltless, before the Lord for ever, from the blood of *Abner*, the son of *Ner*.

29. Let it rest on the head of *Joab*, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of *Joab*, one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

39. And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and—the sons of *Zeruiah* be too hard for me. The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

As to the next objection, it is evident, that if *David* had been acted, in this affair, by a spirit of revenge, he would not have spared *Shimei*, in the very instant of passion, and provocation; and when he was so earnestly importuned, for leave to punish him. *Plutarch* reports of *Pericles*, that when one of the *Athenians* had railed at him, all day, and pursued him to his house, reviling him, *Pericles* only turned about at the door, and calling to one of his servants, ordered him to lead that citizen, home to his house. This is allowed an extraordinary instance of temper in *Pericles*; but it must be observed, that his reviler was a fellow-citizen, *David's* a subject, and a rebel: *Pericles's* conduct but asserted his superiority, over an idle, insignificant, man; *David's* proclaimed his humiliation to God.

St. Ambrose tells us of *Theodosius*, (*de obit. Theod.*) That he looked upon it as a favour done him, when he was desired to forgive. *Theodosius* forgave, when he was petitioned to pardon; *David*, when he was importuned to punish; herein imitating the mercy of God, who, as *Isaiah* expresseth it, *waiteth, that he may be gracious*. Had *David* copied after any lower pattern, he had not spared *Shimei*, in the very instant of passion, and provocation: nor would he afterwards have forgiven him, in the fulness of prosperity, and power. That fulness of power, which is wont to swell other breasts with rancour, at the remembrance of injuries, and insolence, in avenging them, did but soften, and sweeten his. *David's* patience, under *Shimei's* reproaches, is, at once, a strong instance of heroick magnanimity, and signal resignation, to the will of God. He had before conquered great nations, by his fortitude, and conduct, as a captain; and heroes, and leaders, by his personal prowess; but he was now yet greater, upon *Solomon's* principles, in ruling his own spirit, and subduing his resentments, to the humiliation, which he owed

owed to God. He very well knew, how much the remission of personal injuries, became the kingly character, and, therefore, he gave *Shimei* his life, and confirmed the grant, by an oath. But then, it must be remembered, that the obligation of this oath was purely personal ; for so he himself explains it, *1 Kings ii. 8. And I swear unto him, by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death, with the sword.* And, therefore, although *David* was bound, *Solomon* was at full liberty to vindicate the majesty of kings, in chastising this high insult, upon his father, after such a manner, as he thought fit : nor was there any danger of doing this to excess, when the chastisement was deferred, to the calm, and cool season of dispassionate justice : when neither passion, nor personal resentment, could inflame the vengeance. *David* well knew, how much it became the piety of his character, to remit himself, and his concerns, to the divine disposal, throughout the whole course of his life ; but could he, for this reason, wholly renounce the interest of justice ? Or if he could, he very well knew, how dangerous an example it might be to his successors, to suffer such injuries, and insults, upon majesty, to pass unpunished : and, therefore, when he had acted up to the piety, and dignity of his own character, he very wisely admonished his son, to act up to the wisdom of his.

And here I must beg leave to observe, that this reasoning sufficiently justifies *David*, in this point, even upon supposition, that the text is rightly translated, which I am, in my private judgment, fully convinced it is not : for, surely, the particle *Vau* (ו) ought to be rendered here, as in all similar cases, not connectively, but disjunctively. I shall instance only in one case, I might mention many.

Agur * beseeches God, to keep him from the extremes both of poverty, and wealth. If the particle

* *Prov. xxx. 8.*

particle *Vau* were to be interpreted here connectively, the petition would run thus — *Give me not poverty, and riches* — Every one sees the absurdity of this petition ; and, therefore, the translators rightly rendered it, *Give me neither poverty, nor riches*. In the same analogy, the passage in question, rightly translated, will stand thus : *Now, therefore, neither bold him guiltless, (for thou art a wise man, and knowest, what thou oughtest to do unto him) nor his boar head bring thou down to the grave, with blood*. This advice, in this sense, is full of humanity, as well as wisdom ; and *Solomon* (we see) understood, and observed it, in this sense, and in no other.

C H A P. XXVI.

A short Comparison of David with Alexander, Cæsar, and Scipio. His Character concludes this Work.

David compared with Alexander.

MY purpose, in this short essay, is not to debase the sacred character of *David*, by a minute comparison with men, who (with all their vaunts of valour, and military exploits) had little truly heroic, or excellent, in their composition ; and that little, confined, to the single character of *Scipio*. The other two were, at best, but successful, and accomplished robbers, and murderers : riot, and vanity, ambition, irreligion, and sensuality, distinguish, and sum up the rest of their character. The only honour, then, that I mean to *David*, in this comparison, is, barely to shew, how far he excelled them, where they excelled themselves.

To begin then, *Alexander* is celebrated, for a noble instance of abstinence, recorded of him by *Curtius* * ; and, perhaps, the noblest act of his whole life.

The

* See *Curtius, lib. vii. cap. 5.*

The king, distressed with thirst, meets a soldier, carrying some water, to the relief of his sons, in like distress. The generous soldier offers his prince a part of his treasure; he received it, and, upon learning, for whom it was intended, returned it untouched: *It is too little for all, (says he) and I cannot bear to be relieved alone.*

The king had just before been in some despondency, on account of the distress his army suffered, in a desolate country, for want of water; and his friends besought him to remember, that his fortitude was the only stay of his fainting forces: and now a noble occasion offered of animating them to patience, by his own example, and he employed it, with becoming magnanimity.

The reader will recollect a like instance of *David's* abstinence, from the twenty-third chapter of the second book of *Samuel*: *And three of the thirty chiefs went down, and came to David, in the harvest-time, unto the cave of Adullam. And the troop of the Philistines pitched, in the valley of Rephaim: and David was then in an hold, and the garison of the Philistines then in Bethlehem; and David longed, and said, Oh! that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, and took, and brought it to David: nevertheless, he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this! Is not this the blood of the men, that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore, he would not drink it.*

Alexander abstained, in a country where he was master, and under the security of being relieved, in a few hours. He abstained, for the support of an army, which, in all probability, had desponded upon his indulging: nor could he have indulged, without,

without some degree of inhumanity, to a faithful soldier, an afflicted father, and his fainting children. *David* abstained, when he was in hold, and hemmed in, by a mighty army, in the scorching heat of autumn; and when his relief would, in all probability, have given new life to his companions! A much higher, and nobler instance of abstinence, founded upon nobler principles, upon the motives of a most generous humanity, and most exalted piety! What was purchased, at the hazard of such lives, was too precious to be sacrificed to private gratification; and, therefore, was poured out, in a thank-offering to God, for their deliverance.

If we consider *David*, in the light of his personal courage, will any hero of antiquity exceed him? Will any equal him?

Alexander hath, indeed, the fairest claim of competition with him; and yet, I think, *Alexander's* own flattering historian, would be forced to give *David* the preference, upon the comparison. If *Alexander* slew a lion, he slew him, by *Curtius's* own account, armed *, and at advantage; and we know, that *Lyfimachus* claimed the honour of being his assistant, in the combat: not to insist, that *Alexander's* combat was wanton, and out of character, and well deserved the taunt, which the *Spartan* ambassador threw upon him, on that occasion. *David* subdued his lion, (to say nothing of the bear) single, and unarmed, and in the duty of his character; and when he had done so, he took no pride, from the merit of his prowess; but gave God the glory of his deliverance.

Had *Alexander* engaged, and conquered *Porus*, (which, by the way, he manifestly declined, 'till he found him in flight, and wounded) as *David* did *Goliath*; how had the world been stunned, with the
vaunts

* *Curtius, lib. viii. cap. 1.*

vaunts of his own vanity, and the echoes of his flatterers! *David* is the same silent, unassuming man, after his conquest, that he was before, and rather declines, than claims the reward of his prowess * ; judging of his real merit, and the esteem conceived of it by others, by that humble opinion, which he himself entertained of it. And to shew, how intirely he ascribed the success of his combat, to the good providence, and protection of the Almighty, he hung up the sword of *Goliath*, the trophy of his conquest, in the tabernacle of his God.

In one word, *David* is, perhaps, the single instance of great talents, untainted by pride ! or, to speak more properly, of great talents, signally adorned, and illustrated, by a most conspicuous, and exemplary humility !

I have already mentioned some instances of *David's* magnanimity : give me leave to add another, not so interesting, and illustrious, at first sight, and yet, such as, perhaps, will be found, upon inquiry, no way inferior, to the greatest instances of heroism, recorded by antiquity.

David, persecuted by *Saul*, throws himself under the protection of his mortal enemy ; the protection of *Achish*, king of *Gath* : that king, whose hero he had slain, and whose armies he had routed. This was a resolution, above the conception of a common heart ! A resolution, which none, but a consummate hero, was capable of forming ! The generosity of his own heart suggested to him, what reception *Achish* was bound to give him, in the character of a king. He well knew, that the protection of a brave enemy, in distress, was the noblest ensign of royalty ; the character, and test of true glory ! *Achish*, it is true, had it not (kings are not always, what they should be) : *David* found his error, and changed

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his

* 1 Sam. xviii. 18, &c.

his conduct ; and immediately put on that character, to which it was natural his present condition should reduce him : he appeareth mad ; and it was natural to believe, that the distresses he endured, might have turned his brain. *David's* character was well known at *Gath* ; and, perhaps, it was an observation, older than *Solomon*, that *Oppression maketh a wise man mad*. The event was answerable : *Achish* was deluded, and *David* delivered.

A thinking reader will, I am persuaded, find, in this conduct of *David*, all the magnanimity of *Coriolanus*, (freed from the leaven, which debased it) and all the dexterity of *Brutus*.

David compared with Cæsar.

The sacred historian observes of *David*, that he was thirty years old, when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years ; seven years and six months in *Hebron*, and thirty-three in *Jerusalem*.

It is obvious to observe from hence, that *David* was not raised to the throne, till the levity of youth was over ; and with that, the pride, and self-sufficiency, which is so apt to overfet it. He was early anointed to the regal office, to inspire him with noble purposes, and a conduct, suitable to the dignity, for which he was designed ; but he was long exercised, in toils, and calamities of various kinds, before he was put in possession of it ; that he might discharge it, under the united advantages of more experience, and more moderation. And the best historians have observed, that this hath frequently been the condition, and character of the best princes. An observation, sufficiently justified, by the princes of our own, as well as those of other nations.

My Lord *Bacon* observes of *Cæsar*, that he first encountered a rugged fortune, which turned to his
advantage :

advantage : *For this* (saith that noble writer) *curbed his pride, and spurred his industry.*

As *David* had more native, and acquired humility, than any mere mortal, the prevention of pride in him, who was to be a perpetual reformer of the world, and inspirer of virtue, was of vastly more consequence, than the repressing of it in *Cæsar*, who was only a temporary conqueror.

Cæsar, bred up in luxury, and ease, was naturally slothful, (as lions, tigers, and other beasts of prey, are, from a noble appointment of Providence, found to be) though, occasionally, active, beyond most others. *David's* condition of life inured him, to early vigilance : inasmuch that activity quickly became, in him, a natural habit. And the sequel of his life sufficiently shews, of how much consequence it was, to have that habit early inspired, and impressed upon him ; and long cultivated, and continued. *Cæsar's* natural indolence needed all the incitements of ambition, to rouse him to the ruin of his country : *David's* activity called only for those of duty, to inspire him, to redeem his.

Cæsar is celebrated, by all historians, for his clemency ; because, when possessed of the supreme power, he employed it not, in the gratification of his revenge ; but received most of those to mercy, that sued to him for it : that is, *Cæsar* is celebrated, upon this account, that when he had destroyed the constitution of his country, and usurped upon the liberties of his fellow-citizens, he did not, with their liberties, strip all that opposed him of their lives also ; though many he did. *David*, when he had quelled the most unnatural, and most unjust rebellion, that ever was raised, against a rightful, a lawful, a just, a wise, and a good king ; received the whole number of his rebellious subjects, into mercy at once, without making one single sacrifice, either to vengeance, or the terror of rebellion. Here then

is the difference: *Cæsar* is celebrated, for not copying the cruelty of *Marius*, and *Sylla*; *David* is illustrious, for imitating the mercy of God.

David compared with Scipio.

The early scenes of *Scipio* the elder's life, cannot fail to render him an object of the highest admiration, and esteem, to all that honour true fortitude, and true patriotism: that particularly, (after the fatal field of *Cannæ*) in which, with a most glorious resolution, and heroic ardour of soul, he arrested the desperate counsels of some of the young *Roman* nobility, who were deliberating, about deserting their country; and, with his drawn sword at their breasts, forced them into a solemn oath, to abide by it, and support it.

Let me but briefly observe, that the persons thus influenced by *Scipio*, were young, noble, and sufficiently interested, in the well-being of their country. And now, let the candid reader indulge me, in recollecting a short transaction, already noticed, in the life of *David*, wholly referring it, to his own judgment, and ingenuity, to infer, and apply, as he thinks proper.

David, driven into exile, by the joint ingratitude, and injustice of his country, and his prince, became the common refuge of the distressed, the indebted, the discontented: And how did he employ all these? Was it in the common way of gratifying their vices, and his own revenge? Quite otherwise: his first care was, to place his parents, and his brethren, safe, under the protection of the king of *Moab*; and that was scarce over, when the distresses of his country called for his aid. *Keilab* was besieged, by the *Philistines*, the country was ravaged, and the threshing-floors robbed: and *Saul*, intent upon vengeance,

geance *, neglected every thing, but the pursuit of *David*: whilst *David*, careless of his own safety, employed his power, no otherwise, than in influencing all those four, and exasperated spirits, who had now no property, and, of consequence, no interest in the well-being of their country, into one common care, and concern, for its safety; to the double danger of their own lives, from the *Philistines* before them, and *Saul* behind. And, therefore, when *David* urged them, to this glorious enterprize, their answer was very natural: *Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then, if we come to Keilah, against the armies of the Philistines?* They were in sufficient danger, from one enemy, where they were; and could it be less than desperate rashness, to thrust themselves between two? And yet, notwithstanding this remonstrance, *David's* influence prevailed. And, certainly, nothing, but the highest veneration of the superior prowess, wisdom, and magnanimity of their leader, could sway them to so noble a resolution, against such just fears: nor was their confidence misplaced; they fought, they defeated the *Philistines*, with a great slaughter; they spoiled their enemies, and they saved their country.

Had *David* been a Heathen hero, with what endless praises, had this unparalleled instance of patriotism, been pealed in our ears!

Few men have ever won more glory, by any act of heroism, than *Scipio*, by one instance of temperance, in abstaining (in the prime of youth) from a fair captive of great quality, whom the chance of war had put into his power; and restoring her, untouched,

* This eagerness of *Saul*, for vengeance upon *David*, is beautifully expressed, in that attitude, in which he, and his army are painted, in the text, 1 Sam. xxii. 6. *Now Saul abode in Gibeath, under a tree, in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him.*

untouched, and unransomed, to a prince, to whom she was affianced. It hath hitherto made no part of *David's* praise, that he treated *Abigail*, with an abstinence, of, at least, equal virtue. *Scipio's* policy was concerned, in his abstinence; he gained an alliance of great consequence by it: *David* consulted no interest, in his abstinence, but that of virtue.

Scipio abstained, where gratitude must make him a friend: *David*, where ingratitude had made him an enemy. *Scipio* spared the spouse of a young prince, that loved her to distraction: in *David's* case, it might be insisted, that a brute, and a fool, was incapable of love. The same compassion, and humanity, that pleaded for restoring his spouse to *Allucio*, might be pleaded, for not restoring *Abigail* to *Nabal*.

In the last place, *Allucio's* spouse might be fair, yet not desirable, in the eyes of *Scipio*: the event sufficiently shews, that *Abigail* was very amiable, in the eyes of *David*.

In one word, policy, humanity, compassion, and, it may be, indifference, pleaded for the abstinence of *Scipio*; duty only, for that of *David*.

But, after all, it must be owned, that there is one objection to *David's* character, both in point of humility, and patriotism; I mean, the calamity derived upon his country, by his vain numbering of the people.

Admit this the effect of a criminal vanity, (tho' it might as well have been the effect of true piety, and gratitude to God *) yet it must be allowed, that
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* This criminal conduct of *David*, will, however, in my humble opinion, receive some alleviation, from that declaration of his being moved to it, through God's anger, kindled against that people, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 1. and as their antecedent sins had drawn this judgment upon them, their subsequent neglect of the atonement, in that case, required, was, in all probability, a great aggravation of it. See *Exod.* xxx. 12. and subsequent verses.

no vanity could be more natural to the human heart ; no delusion could be more tempting, to a man, raised from obscurity, than a desire of knowing the extent of that royal power, to which he was exalted. And shall one transgression of this kind, impeach a character, established by the tenor of life ? God forbid ! But however this may be deemed, by superficial, and libertine spirits, to affect him, in point of humility, the praise of his patriotism is, undoubtedly, raised by it ; inasmuch as he evidently intended no evil, to his people, in that account he ordered to be taken of them. And when he found it came upon them, he, with a generosity, far transcending that either of a *Decius*, or a *Codrus*, offered not only himself, but his whole family also, to be devoted to destruction, in their stead (2 Sam. xxiv. 17.) : *And David spake unto the Lord, when he saw the angel, that smote the people ; and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly ; but these sheep, what have they done ? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.*

Upon the whole, *David* is a character, which stands single, in the accounts of the world ; equally eminent, and unrivalled.

For, not to insist upon his great personal accomplishments, such as beauty, stature, strength, swiftness, and eloquence ; his character is sufficiently distinguished, by the noblest qualities, endowments, and events.

Exalted, from an humble shepherd, to a mighty monarch, without the least tincture of pride, disdain, or envy ! Quite otherwise, remarkably humble in exaltation ; or rather, humbled by it ! Exalted, unenvied ! Exalted himself, and equally exalting the state he ruled : raising it from contempt, poverty, and oppression, to wealth, dignity, and sway ! A man, experienced in every vicissitude of fortune, and life, and equal to them all ! Thoroughly tried,
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in adversity, and tempted, by success! yet still superior! cruelly, and unjustly persecuted, yet not to be provoked, even to just revenge! In the saddest, and suddenest reverse of fortune, depressed by nothing, but the remembrance of guilt; and, in consequence of that, unhumbled to any thing but God!

To sum up all! A true believer, and zealous adorer of God; teacher of his law, and worship, and inspirer of his praise! A glorious example, a perpetual, and inexhaustible fountain of true piety! A consummate, and unequalled hero, a skilful, and a fortunate captain! A steady patriot, a wise ruler, a faithful, a generous, and a magnanimous friend! And, what is yet rarer, a no less generous, and magnanimous enemy! A true penitent, a divine musician, a sublime poet, and an inspired prophet! By birth, a peasant; by merit, a prince! In youth, a hero; in manhood, a monarch; in age, a saint!

This is DAVID: What his revilers are, their own revilings tell.



The E N D.

